Ex libris

ESSAYS

Annex ON Geometry

INTERESTING SUBJECTS,

WITH

LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND,

ON THE

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

OF

LEARNING AND PHILOSOPHY.

By ROBERT NICHOL,

ACCOMPTANT AND MATHEMATICIAN, EDINBURGH.

THE SECOND EDITION,

WITH CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENTS AND ADDITIONS.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

BY GRANT AND MOIR, PATERSON'S COURT,

AND SOLD BY

J. ELDER, NORTH BRIDGE-STREET.

Anno 1792.

15
80
11 DEC

TO

HER GRACE

ELIZABETH, DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUGH,

THE FOLLOWING

ESSAYS AND LETTERS,

IN TESTIMONY OF SINCERE ESTEEM,

FOR A CHARACTER

CONSPICUOUS FOR WORTH AND EXCELLENCE,

NO LESS THAN

DIGNIFIED BY AN EXALTED STATION.

ARE, BY PERMISSION,

WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT,

HUMBLY INSCRIBED,

BY

HER GRACE's

Moſt obedient,

And moſt humble Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

MADAM,

THE honour your Grace has done me, in condeſcending to become *my Patroneſs*, merits my warmeſt acknowledgements and higheſt gratitude: But that gratitude, which dignifies and ennobles the human mind, by raiſing it up to the moſt worthy and exalted views of human nature, is, like all the other fine feelings of the heart, not eaſily expreſſed in language. It is much better felt than it is in the power of language to expreſs: Language therefore fails me in expreſſing the gratitude I feel.

The houſes of BUCCLEUGH and MONTAGUE have long been diſtinguiſhed ornaments to the Britiſh nation. May a race of illuſtrious ſucceſſors, as conſpicuous for true goodneſs, as dignified by an exalted ſtation, tranſmit their names to lateſt poſterity. May you, Madam, long continue a ſhining ornament to this nation, by the exerciſe of thoſe amiable virtues which your Grace does ſo eminently poſſeſs.

Thoſe beneficent and humane diſpoſitions of mind, which ſo remarkably characteriſe your Grace, do honour to human nature, and ſwell the heart with the moſt rapturous ſtrains of admiration, while we behold your Grace, like the great Father of the Univerſe, diffuſing bleſſings among multitudes of the human race.

I have the honour to be, with the greateſt reſpect,

MADAM,

YOUR GRACE'S

Much obliged,

And moſt obedient,

Humble Servant,

ROBERT NICHOL.

ADVER-

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE ſucceſs of the firſt impreſſion has encouraged the Author, with the advice of ſome friends, to publiſh a ſecond edition. It is now given to the public with conſiderable additions: he hopes it will not be leſs acceptable.

IT was intended to have added ſome Letters to this Edition, on the Newtonian philoſophy; but the Author's bad ſtate of health for a long time, while the preſs was going on, prevented it.

THE Author of the following Eſſays and Letters might perhaps have appeared in a more reſpectable light, by writing on ſome other ſubjects in his profeſſional line.—

But,

But, beſides that the following were his favourite ſtudies in his younger years, they accorded better with his ſtate of mind at the time he wrote, than to write on ſcience. In ſome of the Eſſays, particularly the firſt, he has perhaps departed from an opinion pretty generally received among men, with regard to the light of nature, and the extent of the human powers in reaſoning from it. He can only ſay, he has endeavoured to ſet that matter in the light in which, after the moſt mature inveſtigation, it appears to him. The light of nature is not well underſtood: It is become rather a vague unmeaning term, as it has not been properly defined. What can, with any propriety, be called the light of nature, is that light that would ariſe to man from the viſible frame of nature, as it comes under his obſervation; and how far this light would lead his reaſoning powers in making diſcoveries from it, if no revelation had ever been in the world. But in truth, this is an experiment that never could

could be made, as the world never was without revelation.

It is not fair to reaſon, from any notions of Deity that may be found among ſavage, uncivilized nations, who never had revelation, that ſo far the light of nature will go. This is quite different from the notions they would have had, if revelation had never been in the world; at leaſt, it cannot be inferred from their ideas on this ſubject, that they would have had preciſely the ſame views and ideas though revelation had never been known among men. What led the Heathen poets to their beautiful deſcription of what they call the *Golden Age*, ſo different from what human nature is now, and ever has been? What poſſibly could lead them to form ſuch exalted views and ideas of human nature, but the Moſaic account of paradiſe? and much leſs could they have any idea of ſuch a renovation of it as Virgil deſcribes, which is evidently copied from the prophets.—

But,

But, of all things, how ſhould it ever have come into any perſon's head, that the world, the earth and ſeas, and the heavens themſelves, the whole viſible frame of nature, ſhould at laſt be deſtroyed by fire, as Ovid deſcribes it, from the tradition current among the Heathens? Theſe lead to an obſervation, which it is very natural to make, That there are ſeveral truths current in the world, which are thought to be natural to the human mind, but which have their origin in revelation.

CONTENTS.

CONTENTS.

ESSAY I. On Creation: with an enquiry into the extent of the powers of the human mind in reasoning from it. - - 1

II. On Human Nature and human knowledge. - - - - - - 29

III. On the Knowledge of God. - - 47

IV. On Faith. - - - 59

V. On the Love of God. - - 67

VI. On the Character of Jesus Christ, with a View of the Constitution of Grace, as it is established in him. - - - 77

VII. On the Character of God. - 141

VIII. On Self Knowledge. - - 161

IX. On the Original State of Mankind. 199

LETTERS. - - - - 243

ESSAYS,

ESSAYS, &c.

ESSAY I.

On Creation, &c.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.——None but God could be the Author of that ſentence: It carries its own evidence with invincible demonſtration, and is infinitely ſuperior to all the reaſonings and pretended demonſtrations of men about it. Creation is the moſt aſtoniſhing effect of power that is known among: men It is ſuch, that, by the utmoſt efforts of the unaſſiſted powers of the human mind, or what is ſometimes called the "light of nature," we can form no idea of any power adequate to ſuch an effect. No man ſaw, or could ſee, this ſtupendous frame of nature riſe out of nothing into exiſtence; and no man can know that it did ſo, without being told it. With regard to what is paſt, we have only two ways of coming by the knowledge of facts; either we ourſelves muſt have

 been

been witneſſes of the fact,—or we muſt have it by information. Thoſe who are not accuſtomed to think, believe, as they have been told, that the world was created by God; but what creation is, or of the power neceſſary to create, they know nothing: They ſee the operations of nature conducted and carried on in an uniform and regular manner: they ſee the viciſſitudes of day and night regularly return: the ſeaſons of the year they obſerve regularly ſucceed to one another, and the different effects they have upon our earth.—All theſe they know are neceſſary for anſwering the purpoſes of life, and of happineſs to man in life: But they look no farther: They do not enquire into cauſes; or how theſe things come to be ſo: They take them as they are laid to their hand, without any farther enquiry. Perhaps it is well and wiſely ordered, that the bulk of mankind, who are not philoſophers, ſhould receive theſe truths in the manner they do, and with that evidence they think they have: it anſwers all the purpoſes of life to them, as well as to the moſt profound philoſopher after all his laboured reſearches.

Philoſophy has led us into a different train of thinking; and we muſt account for the cauſes of every thing in nature. The facts with which we are furniſhed, with regard to creation, and the eſtabliſhing

eſtabliſhing that great truth, are of more importance, and carry more conviction to the mind, than the moſt laboured philoſophical reaſonings can give their diſquiſitions. Philoſophers, who overvalue the powers of the human mind, or rather aſcribe to it powers of which it is not poſſeſſed, tell us, that, by the proper exereiſe of theſe powers, we are led, by a chain of concluſive reaſoning, from the works of the viſible creation, as it lies open to our veiw, to the knowledge of its great Author,—to diſcover the being and perfections of God, the Creator of heaven and earth; and upon that to found a ſyſtem of what is called Natural Religion, whereby we know the worſhip, the duties we owe to God as our Creator; the duties we owe to ourſelves, and to one another, independent of revelation. It were much to be wiſhed, that philoſophers, and philoſophical divines, had given a more ſerious attention to a matter of ſuch importance:—More, much more depends upon it than is commonly attended to. The knowledge of God has been in the world, ever ſince there were men in the world to obſerve it: The queſtion is, How it came there? How did man firſt come by the knowledge of God as the Creator of heaven and earth, and moral governor of the world? Did God manifeſt and make him-

ſelf known to his creature man; or was man left to the exerciſe of his own powers, to make the diſcovery to himſelf from the bare inſpection of the works which he beheld, and his reaſoning upon them? Is it poſſible to heſitate a moment in determining this queſtion? Who does not know that the great Creator diſcovered himſelf, his divine perfections and powers, to man, through the medium of the works which he had made; the only medium, as we ſhall afterwards ſee more fully, through which man, from the conſtitution of his nature, is capable of receiving this information and knowledge. Creative power is ſo much beyond the reach of human inveſtigation, ſo much above all our means of perception, that the greateſt exertion of the powers of the human mind cannot enable man to form any idea or conception of it. What then muſt we conclude? What can we conclude, but, with the wiſeſt among the antient philoſophers, declare creation impoſſible? Where is the impoſſibility, ſays a philoſopher, when every thing we behold around us, leads us, by the proper exerciſe of our powers of mind, to the knowledge of a firſt Cauſe, the great Creator? I would wiſh to know how this chain of reaſoning, and the evidence ariſing from it, is led and ſupported. We think we can reaſon from effects to cauſes,

and

and from the creation, which philoſophers ſay is an effect, a made thing, to a firſt cauſe, which we call God. Reaſoning in this way is fair and concluſive, where both cauſe and effect fall under our obſervation, and ly fairly within our view, ſo as we can trace the inſeparable connexion between them; much uſeful knowledge may be acquired in this way, in the circumſtances that have been mentioned. But when the cauſe lies quite beyond the reach of all our means of perception, and where we have no means of inveſtigation, by which we can certainly conclude any thing to be an effect, or that it once was not, our reaſoning is at an end, we can form no concluſion.

If what is meant by the ſufficiency of the light of nature to lead us to the knowledge of this great truth, the knowledge of the true God as the Creator of heaven and earth: If I ſay, by this, we are to underſtand no more than that man is conſtitutionally ſo formed, that whenever he comes to underſtand the terms in which this great truth is expreſſed, he cannot help aſſenting to it, this is readily allowed. Such is the conſtitution of human nature, that whenever we are told this important truth, the exiſtence of a Deity, who created the world, and governs it in the perfection of wiſdom and goodneſs, we can-

not, without doing violence to our own minds, reſiſt the evidence with which it is attended. But when do we come to underſtand the terms in which this truth is expreſſed?---never, till we are told there is a God: The diſcovery, therefore, and knowledge of this truth, cannot with any propriety, be called natural to the mind of man; that is, he could not, by the unaſſiſted powers of his mind, be led from the viſible creation to the knowledge of a Creator. The knowledge of this truth depends upon teſtimony; we have that teſtimony given us by God himſelf; it is therefore not more natural to the mind of man than any of the truths of revelation; theſe, we know, all depend upon the divine teſtimony: we have the ſame divine teſtimony for this truth, that God is, and is the Creator and governor of the world, and which lays a proper foundation for the whole plan of divine revelation.

However we may pretend to infer wiſdom, contrivance and deſign, from harmony and form; and however we may imagine, and forms are an effect which neceſſarily ſuppoſe a cauſe, yet the exiſtence of matter itſelf can afford no conceivable proof nor ſuggeſtion to the mind of man of the poſſibility of its once non-exiſtence; and unleſs it can be aſcertained, that matter did once not exiſt, we can never find that one

gave

gave it exiſtence, or that there is a Creator. All the force of human underſtanding has never been able to produce a deciſive proof that there is a Creator and Author of all things, abſolutely diſtinct from, and infinitely ſuperior to matter itſelf: The reaſon is obvious. It is impoſſible for a creature to prove,---it is even impoſſible for the ſources of human knowledge to afford the mind of man the very ſuggeſtion, that ſomething or matter was once nothing. The concluſion we are naturally led to make from this, is, that, for any thing we know, the world may have exiſted from eternity; and, for any thing we know, it may continue to exiſt to all eternity, unleſs we are told otherwiſe.---We ſee no veſtiges of a beginning, no proſpect of an end. The powers by which all the operations of nature are conducted, mutually ſupport each other, ſo as not to be ſubject to waſte or decay; and that the powers of nature, were not the framers of nature, is a fact we can know only by revelation. Who told the firſt man, and who has taught mankind ever ſince, that there was a Creator? The Creator himſelf. He has diſcovered himſelf to man through the medium of his works, on which he has ſtamped indelible characters of his divine perfection and powers.

The

The reaſoning of philoſophers on this ſubject is much of a piece with the reaſoning of deiſts againſt revelation, and has perhaps laid ſome foundation for it. The truth is already known, the knowledge of it has been in the world ever ſince the world exiſted; and we vainly think we can acquire that important piece of knowledge by our own reaſoning powers, without any previous intimation about it:--- Deiſts in the ſame manner know the truths of the golpel, and the facts upon which they are founded; and much information they have received from that knowledge: Weak and feeble as their reaſonings are (for they have been turned out of every argument but ſatyr, burleſque and lampoon), yet they could not have reaſoned in the manner they have done, had it not been for the aſſiſtance they have had from revelation; and very ungratefully they turn that light and knowledge they receive from revelation againſt itſelf in order to overtnrn the revelation that made the diſcovery. I have already ſaid, the reaſoning of philoſophers, with regard to the ſufficiency of the light of nature, and the extent of the human powers, to lead us to the knowledge of God, and of Creation, &c. is much of the ſame nature, and has perhaps contributed not a little to the prevalence of deiſm

in

in the world: "Vain man would be wiſe, though "he is born like a wild aſs's colt."

It is not a little ſurpriſing to find men, who, I ſincerely believe are warmly attached to the intereſts of religion and virtue, reaſon upon this ſubject in ſuch a manner as to make the truth of revelation itſelf depend upon the previous diſcoveries we are capable of making of God and creation, from the light of nature: "For how," ſay they, "how ſhall we ever be certain that a revelation comes from God, unleſs we can firſt diſcover that there is a God, and ſuch a one as will not impoſe upon or deceive us." If I underſtand the force of this reaſoning, it amounts to this; that if man cannot diſcover God to himſelf without revelation, it is impoſſible for God to reveal or diſcover himſelf to his creatures.--- There is a degree of impiety in this which I will not aſcribe to thoſe who reaſon in this manner, becauſe I do not think they foreſee it.

It is certainly more becoming in creatures, ſuch as we are, gratefully to acknowledge the infinite obligations we are under to God, for the important and gracious diſcoveries he has made of himſelf, and the inſtructive leſſons he would condeſcend to teach us, if we would, with humility, as becomes us, ſubmit to be taught by him,

allow

allow him to explain his own works, and not ſet up for independent diſcoverers.

It is but juſt to acknowlege, that God has at no time left us to our own uncertain gueſſes, with regard to the knowledge of himſelf, or whatever might be of importance for us to know. He has graciouſly condeſcended to become our inſtructor, and, for that purpoſe, has put the inſtructive volume of the creation into our hands. But as he well knew that man left to himſelf, would make nothing of the creation, in regard to the elevation of his mind to the knowledge of God, he has therefore given it a language, which man never could have found out, but which it is highly neceſſary, in order to his future happineſs, that he ſhould know. He has given it in revelation, a ſyſtematic language: So that, inſtead of yielding ſome preſumptions, looſe conjectures of the goodneſs, &c. of God, from which we may expect, we know not what ſafety, ſecurity, and happineſs; inſtead of that, God has explained and exhibited himſelf to man, by all the variety of relations and actions, which the eſtabliſhment of nature miniſters unto him, for his ſupport and happineſs, during his exiſtence in his preſent ſtate. It is extremely beautiful and pleaſing, to view the creation in this light; and it is the juſteſt light in which it can

be

be viewed. It is by viewing it in this light only, that we can make it ſubſervient to the purpoſes the Creator intended it ſhould anſwer to man.

Viewing nature in this light, it becomes a piece of ſcenery or painting, for exhibiting a higher building, an houſe, as the Apoſtle terms it, not made with hands; and our preſent life becomes an emblematical repreſentation of another and better life, which mankind are called and invited by the moſt endearing conſiderations, to be ſharers of, where the divine perfections and powers are more fully manifeſted and diſplayed in behalf of mankind.

The ſum of what I have endeavoured to ſupport, is, that man, left to himſelf, to the exerciſe of his natural powers, can make nothing of the creation, taken by itſelf, in regard to the elevation of his mind to the knowledge of God. I have ſaid, the creation taken by itſelf--For there is a wide difference between the creation, as taken by itſelf, and the creation in the light which Revelation ſets it. It has been remarked by a late writer, with great juſtneſs, that it has been the foible of human nature, for mankind to overlook the moſt obvious, yet important truths, and go in queſt of others, which, for want of proper *data* to reaſon upon, they can never arrive

rive at the knowledge of. Perhaps there is not a more ſtriking inſtance of the juſtneſs of this remark, than the ſlight attention that has been given to the creation in the two different views juſt now mentioned. This view may be extended; it may be affirmed that as we would make nothing of the creation, in regard to the knowledge of God, and a future world, without revelation; ſo we could make nothing of revelation, without the viſible creation. It requires the knowledge of both, as they are intimately connected by the great Author of nature, to lead us to the knowledge of theſe truths that regard our future happineſs.

Let us ſuppoſe it poſſible, that the revelation we have could have been given us without the viſible creation—What could we make of it? Nothing. The creation is the ground-work of revelation; and revelation gives a ſignificant, a ſyſtematic language to nature. Something we might make of the creation, without revelation, for anſwering the purpoſes of a preſent life, but our views would riſe no higher; all the obſervations and diſcoveries we could poſſibly make, would reach no farther than to what reſpects our preſent ſtate of exiſtence:—But of revelation, the great deſign of which is, to direct our views to futurity, by giving us the knowledge of God,

God---of the diſpenſation of grace which is eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt, for the recovery of fallen man; and to fit and train us up for endleſs felicity and happineſs in the heavenly ſtate---Of this revelation, without the creation, we could make nothing at all: for, as has been already obſerved, we are inſtructed in the knowledge of the important truths of revelation, by conſtant references to material objects:--through that medium, and the medium of our ſenſes, as connected with matter, we acquire all our knowledge, even of ſpiritual things.—The creation and revelation throw mutual light upon each other; and pity it were that their intimate connexion was not more ſeriouſly attended to.

The author of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, has ſet this matter in the ſame light that has here been attempted. He aſſures us, that it is by faith only, we underſtand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. If the knowledge of creation is a matter of faith, our knowledge of it muſt depend upon teſtimony, for there can be no faith, where no teſtimony is given. Nothing leſs than the divine teſtimony, that of the great Creator, was neceſſary to inſtruct, or bring mankind to the knowledge of this important truth, that the world was created. He accordingly has given it, and given it with that de-

gree of power and evidence, that no fair enquirer, can reſiſt the evidence ariſing from it. It is true, the ſame Apoſtle tells us, that the inviſible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly ſeen; being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; ſo that they are without excuſe.—The reaſoning from this text, by thoſe who wiſh to ſupport the ſufficiency of the light of nature, to lead us to the knowledge of God, is this: The inviſible things of God, that is, his eternal power and godhead, his exiſtence, the divine powers and perfections of his nature, are clearly ſeen, known, or underſtood, from the viſible creation, the works that he hath made; ſo that they are without excuſe, who do not, from the things that are made, (perhaps it might have been as well rendered, from the things that are done), that is, from the works which we behold, diſcover the being, and perfections of the great Creator, the true God: elſe how could the Romans be culpable for not having the knowledge of God, if that knowledge cannot be fully and clearly inſtructed from the viſible creation, as they had not revelation. This reaſoning is ſpecious, but not concluſive. If we look into the context, we find the Apoſtle tell us, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs,

godlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs.—They held the truth: they therefore had the knowledge of God; but they held that truth in unrighteouſneſs: for, as the Apoſtle afterwards adds, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God. But how came they by this knowledge? The Apoſtle informs us, That, ſays he, which may be known of God, is manifeſt in them. How is it manifeſt? The Apoſtle adds, For God hath ſhewed it unto them. How had he ſhewed it to them, for it is acknowledged they had not revelation? God has at no time left himſelf without a witneſs. He at firſt manifeſted himſelf to man; and the knowledge of that truth has never been wholly obliterated or effaced. Before writing was introduced, the knowledge of it, as well as of many other truths, were taught, and handed downfrom one generation, from one age to another. It is true, it was often much obſcured, and wrapt up in fables, by the folly and inventions of men, but was never totally loſt. That the Heathen world had the knowledge of a God and Creator by tradition, is a truth not to be diſputed; many evidences might be adduced in ſupport of this fact, which the learned will candidly allow. And when we are once told, in whatever way, that there is a

ſupreme Being, a Creator of heaven and earth, we are conſtitutionally ſo formed, that, as has been already obſerved, we cannot help aſſenting to the truth. But this is quite different from a diſcovery.

Upon the whole, it my be affirmed, that all the knowledge of God that ever was in the world, has come from himſelf. He only could place his creation in ſuch a light, as, by that medium, to lead man to the knowledge of himſelf; and he has done it. Did mankind view the creation in the light in which it is placed by the Creator, it would produce very different effects on the minds of men, from what we ſee it does.

Philoſophers have thought otherways. Deſpiſing the plain ſimple road that is pointed out to us by God himſelf for acquiring knowledge, elated with the ſelf-ſufficiency of their own powers, and truſting to this infallible guide; they treat with contempt the inſtructions of a divine teacher:---Reaſon, infallible reaſon, is made the meaſure and ſtandard of every thing, both in the viſible and inviſible world:---Nothing, ſays a philoſopher, can exiſt without a cauſe; therefore there is a firſt cauſe, and ſo this world muſt have had a beginning, ſince it once was not. But may one aſk, Who gave him

him the idea of creation; or how came he ever to think of ſo ſtupenduous an act, which is not, could not be the object of any of his ſenſes? Or who told him that the world once was not, and therefore muſt neceſſarily have a beginning, which as neceſſarily ſuppoſes a firſt cauſe? Reaſon, infallible reaſon, pronounces poſitively with regard to all theſe---for thus he aſks himſelf, on viewing the ſtupenduous fabric of nature, How came theſe things there? They were made. Why do I conclude they were made? My reaſon tells me, they could not make themſelves. But could he that made them make himſelf? Why not one thing make itſelf as well as another: But if every thing muſt have a cauſe, what is the cauſe of the firſt cauſe? Neceſſity. What is neceſſity? Here I ſuppoſe our philoſopher would find the neceſſity he was under of ſitting down in the dark, as to the knowledge of theſe important truths, after all the reaſoning he could poſſibly make uſe of. And it would be well, if this would lead him to ſee the ſtill farther neceſſity of a revelation from heaven,—of a divine teacher, to whom he muſt apply, before he can arrive with any degree of certainty at the knowledge of theſe things. But in truth, a cauſe of the firſt cauſe is a contradiction in terms; and the firſt poſition our phi-

loſopher ſets out with, viz. That every thing that exiſts muſt have a cauſe of its exiſtence, when we are enquiring, whether every thing that exiſts has a cauſe or not, is directly begging the queſtion. Whether this world had a cauſe or not, is the queſtion?---Yes, ſays the philoſopher, for every thing that exiſts has a cauſe; therefore the world has a cauſe. Philoſophers may talk at random as much and as long as they pleaſe; but all the reaſon and philoſophy in the world could never have anſwered the queſtion, unleſs we had been told it.

Hence, it is evident, that without revelation, we could not have known there was a creation: and, of conſequence, could not have acquired the knowledge of God, or of a Creator.

It has been already obſerved, that reaſon is made the meaſure and ſtandard of every thing, both with regard to the material and ſpiritual world. This requires ſome animadverſion. Reaſon, the idol of philoſophers, has long been conſidered as a ſource of knowledge to the human mind: Almoſt every poſſible diſcovery has been attributed to this faculty--diſcoveries, not only in the arts and ſciences, phyſics and ethics, &c., which are more immediately connected with this viſible material ſyſtem; but they have extended its province beyond the viſible frame of

nature,

nature, and have made the world believe that they have made diſcoveries of the utmoſt importance relative to the inviſible ſpiritual world. Hence reaſon has diſcovered the exiſtence of a Deity, that he created the world which he continues to uphold by infinite power, and governs by infinite wiſdom and goodneſs: It has informed us of the whole plan of connexions and relations that God has eſtabliſhed, not only among his creatures, but between himſelf and them---it diſcovers to us our duty to our Creator, to mankind, and to ourſelves; and what we have to hope or fear, in conſequence of our performing or not performing theſe duties. Theſe are important diſcoveries, could it be inſtructed that reaſon is capable of making them: But, unhappily for philoſophers, I do not ſay for mankind, (for they are taught in a much ſhorter and eaſier way) reaſon cannot make theſe diſcoveries. It is not a little ſurpriſing that a truth of ſuch importance ſhould have eſcaped the attention of philoſophers ſo long, viz. that *reaſon can make no diſcoveries*;---it is owing to miſtaken views of the powers of the human mind, that any diſcoveries were ever attributed to that faculty. It is by no means the province of reaſon to diſcover facts; it can only judge of and determine concerning facts or truths already diſcovered; It

muſt have ſubjects given to it :—It cannot create or produce them itſelf; it is only a power or capacity of diſcerning, approving and acquieſcing in connexions and conſequences already formed, and eſtabliſhed in ſuch a manner as to ſhow themſelves neceſſary and irreverſible to a creature.

But in nothing relating to God and nature, can human reaſon plan connexions and conſequences called neceſſary laws : Let philoſophers try the experiment; let them examine with fairneſs and candour, the reaſoning power of the human mind; and after ſuch an enquiry, they will find, that the province here aſſigned to the reaſoning power in man, is the province aſſigned to it, from the conſtitution of human nature by the Author of our being.

The knowledge of human nature has long been a ſubject of enquiry with the learned; and though there are few more intereſting and important, yet perhaps there are few in which they have more univerſally failed : The conſtitution of human nature, the extent of its powers, its principles of action, its feelings, and their effects on the human mind, and their influence, the effects theſe feelings of the mind have upon the human frame, are not yet ſufficiently underſtood,

derſtood, after all the enquiries and laboured inveſtigations that have been made concerning them.

What has perhaps contributed not a little to retard the progreſs of the learned, in this enquiry, is the variety of opinions that have prevailed, the different and interfering ſyſtems of philoſophy, founded upon the different views which philoſophers have had of human nature. Our acquiſition of knowledge, it is true, muſt neceſſarily be by ſlow, and almoſt imperceptible degrees: But had the enquiries of philoſophers been well directed and properly conducted, we have reaſon to believe the ſucceſs attending them would have been much greater than it is. It has already been obſerved, that the only medium by which man can be inſtructed in the knowledge of the intellectual ſyſtem, is the material ſyſtem with which he is connected. Let it now be further obſerved, that the only medium by which the ſpiritual powers in man are rouſed and brought into action, is his ſenſes: His underſtanding is inſtructed, and riſes to higher degrees of improvement by the perceptions which his ſenſes tranſmit; nor is it poſſible the underſtanding can be informed in any other way;—ſo that with all the capacity he has, he can make no progreſs in matters higher than ſenſe, unleſs

leſs he takes the creation for his leſſon, and the Omnipotent Creator for his preceptor.

In what poſſible way can man exerciſe his organs of ſenſe without the creation; and what can he make of the creation, with regard to the exerciſe of his ſpiritual powers and capacities, without revelation? Nothing.

Had this truth been more ſeriouſly attended to, learning and knowledge would have been in a much higher ſtate of perfection than they yet are: That we derive all our knowledge from the operations of nature, is a truth ſo evident as does not admit of a doubt;—it is from the influence of the ſun diffuſing a vital principle through nature that we owe our notions of life. What life is we cannot ſay; nor can any philoſopher ſay more than the meaneſt peaſant:—We only can judge of it from its effects, as they come under our obſervation; and this is all we know of life. From operations of force and impulſe we derive our conceptions of power; the variety, ſubtility, intricacy and arrangement of the operations of nature, are inſeparably connected with our apprehenſions of wiſdom. The ſtability of the frame of nature, and the certainty of its effects, furniſh us with the apprehenſion of unchangeableneſs and truth. Light

ſtands

ſtands for knowledge and underſtanding, and darkneſs for ignorance.

Such is the conſtitution of human nature, that we can acquire knowledge only by the operations of nature, through the medium of our ſenſes, as acted upon by them.

It is weak, I had almoſt ſaid, wicked, in man to deſert, and refuſe to be inſtructed by ſuch a wiſe and kind inſtructor, as he has in the great Creator; and without the very elements of knowledge in his head, ſet up for making diſcoveries independent of the inſtructions of his divine teacher.

Aſk a philoſopher, who boaſts ſo much of the natural powers of man, and pretends to know ſo much of God, without allowing him to diſcover himſelf, and explain his own works; aſk him, If the ſun teaches him that God is all eye, all life, all power? In what world, then, does this ſpiritual life diſplay its power?

Is the figure of Almighty perfection diſſeminating life and happineſs through millions of beings? and does the great Original ſhed his life, his divine influences no where, but only ſurvey the figure of himſelf, without bringing his own original powers more extenſively into immediate exerciſe?

Here,

Here, all appears dark and obſcure; for unleſs a philoſopher can deduce from nature, where and how the ſpiritual powers of the Almighty are directly applied, upon whom they operate, what effects they produce, what influences they ſhed, he does nothing, but muſt remain ignorant of all the diſpenſations of a ſpiritual, omnipotent being: and from what has been obſerved in this eſſay, it appears, that man, by the utmoſt efforts of the powers of his mind, is not capable of this deduction. What has been kept chiefly in view, is to inſtruct a truth that has been too much overlooked, and too little attended to, That *Creation* is an effect of power ſo aſtoniſhingly great, that the human mind can form no idea of any power adequate to ſuch an effect, and never could come to the knowledge of a creation, without being told it, that is, without revelation

It follows, as a neceſſary conſequence, that man could never have known there was a Creator. This neceſſarily leads to the knowledge of another truth,—That the light of nature, or the powers of the human mind, is not ſufficient to lead man to the knowledge of God, without revelation.

Philoſophers may ſpeculate on this ſubject, as they have done at great length; but we are certain,

certain, the diſcovery never was made, and we have all the reaſon in the world to believe, it never will be made; how then can it be affirmed, with ſo much confidence, that man is capable of making the diſcovery?

Revelation has been frequently mentioned in this Eſſay:—It is not intended to give a view of the plan of revelation here; that may probably fall in afterwards: all that is farther meant, is a ſhort view of the conexion between the Old and New Teſtament.

The Old and New Teſtament revelations ſtand in ſome ſuch relation to one another, as that of a parable and its interpretation. They are in ſome ſort connected in the ſame manner as a fable and its moral. The books commonly called the New Teſtament, give an account of the diſcovery of thoſe divine perfections and powers which conſtitute the excellency and glory of a ſpiritual omnipotent One: A glory and excellence, that never, before the appearance of the Son of God in human nature, was exhibited to creatures of any kind. All theſe perfections and powers, that glory and excellence, was diſcovered to mankind in the ſentiments, words, actions and ſufferings of a man,—the man Chriſt Jeſus.

There we have unfolded all thoſe divine truths and doctrines, relative to God, which are neceſſary for man to know concerning him, and which are comprehenſible by intelligent creatures; which truths are all founded upon that divine exhibition, which was made of them by God's manifeſting himſelf in the fleſh. It alſo diſcovers the infinite, the gracious ends and purpoſes for which this divine diſcovery was made; with all the effects and conſequences of it.

The whole, taken together, compoſes that perfect original of ſpiritual glory which the earthly glory under the law pointed out and prefigured, and which the prophets, who wrote in that ſtile, foretold. By this means we have the divine lineaments, and that material figure of them which God himſelf deſigned, ſo adjuſted to one another, that every eye may trace the perfect likeneſs.

That glory is, in a peculiar manner, manifeſted to man in that conſtitution of grace which God has graciouſly eſtabliſhed in Jeſus-Chriſt.

It was not the buſineſs of our bleſſed Saviour, and his Apoſtles, the New Teſtament writers, to comment upon and explain the Old Teſtament diſpenſation. Their buſineſs was, to fulfil and accompliſh the great plan that was laid

laid by infinite wiſdom; not for recovering man to his original ſtate of innocence, as we have been often told; but for raiſing him up to a much higher degree of perfection and happineſs than he was capable of by his firſt creation ſtate: This gracious plan was begun in the Old Teſtament diſpenſation, and was carried on by a gradual illuſtration, becoming more and more clear to ſucceeding ages, till it appeared in its meridian glory, by the exhibition of Jeſus Chriſt in the fleſh.

Of this gradual progreſs of the diſpenſation of grace, we have a beautiful illuſtration in the prophecies of Ezekiel; where, ſpeaking of the waters, they are repreſented at firſt as a ſhallow ſtream that would only reach to the ankles; they afterwards reached to the knees; next to the loins; and at laſt became a great river that no one could paſs over: This is a juſt, a beautiful and elegant, though figurative repreſentation of the manner in which that diſpenſation of grace towards man has been conducted and carried on.

It has been obſerved, that the buſineſs of our Lord and his Apoſtles was to fulfil and accompliſh the great events that were foretold in the Old Teſtament: it was to diſplay that true glory, which, when completely revealed, appeared

the true original of all that was prefigured of old. Thus it appears, that, in the plan of divine revelation, under the direction of infinite wisdom, the Old and New Teſtament diſpenſations correſpond ſo exactly, that the one is a full and complete accompliſhment of all that was foretold in the other. Was this truth better underſtood, and more ſeriouſly attended to, it would perhaps have the happy tendency of ſilencing in a great meaſure the cavils of ſceptics againſt revelation.

ESSAYS.

ESSAYS, &c.

ESSAY II.

On Human Nature and Human Knowledge.

THE knowledge of human nature, it has been formerly obſerved, has long been a ſubject of enquiry and inveſtigation with the learned. Unhappily for mankind, their enquires have not been attended with that ſucceſs that could have been wiſhed, which creates a ſuſpicion that the enquiries concerning it have not been well directed. Man is ſuch a complicated piece of mechaniſm, from his conſtituent parts, matter and ſpirit,—his active and mental powers —his affections and paſſions, that it is perhaps impoſſible, in our preſent ſtate, to give any proper or juſt account of the human conſtitution: We know it only by its effects, as it operates in common life.

The union between the body and the mind, or between matter and ſpirit, is allowed by all;

but the point of union has never been aſcertained by any one. How the mind operates on the body, or how ſpirit operates on matter: and how the body affects the mind; or how matter affects ſpirit, we do not know—nor has any philoſopher ever been able to ſay. To thoſe who think, the human conſtitution will appear one of the moſt abſtruſe and difficult ſubjects of inveſtigation that ever engaged the attention of man: We know as little of it as we know of what conſtitutes the eſſence of matter: of the one, we know nothing but by its properties; of the other, we know nothing but by its effects. However, human nature is a ſubject worthy of enquiry, though it is perhaps impoſſible, in our preſent ſtate, to develope the whole human conſtitution,---it is ſo complicated. Much has been wrote, and by men of diſtinguiſhed abilities, on the philoſophy of the human mind:—The greateſt efforts of genius have been made for ſetting that matter in a clear light: Yet ſtill it is not well underſtood; and perhaps one would not err much who ſhould ſay,—a perfect knowledge of it cannot be acquired in our preſent imperfect ſtate. From the enquiries that have been made into this intricate ſubject, and the diſcoveries that have been made in conſequence of them, we indeed make ſtill farther diſcoveries, but they are diſ-

coveries

coveries of our own ignorance: We are taught by them to know how little we are capable of knowing: for all the knowledge the moſt exalted geniuſes among mankind can attain to, is but little in compariſon of what ſtill remains to be known. That degree of it which I have now in view, and the higher attainments we are capable of making in it, muſt be reſerved for a fund of everlaſting entertainment, and higher degrees of improvement, in the regions of perfect knowledge. Still, however, notwithſtanding the low meaſures of knowledge we are capable of acquiring here, yet it is an important truth, however little attended to, that we are in a ſtate of moral trial, with regard to the improvement of our minds in knowledge, as well as in virtue. It may be ſaid, as I know it often has been ſaid, that we are accountable for no more knowledge than God and nature have given us. This is falſe reaſoning. So far as we have the means of acquiring knowledge put into our hands, we are highly culpable if we do not make the proper uſe and improvement of them. When I ſpeak of knowledge, I would not be underſtood to mean the knowledge of particular arts and ſciences;—theſe are of great uſe in life, and may be acquired by proper application to the ſtudy of them: What I have chiefly

chiefly in view, is that knowledge of every kind, which has a tendency to dignify and raiſe the human mind to that degree of perfection and happineſs it is capable of acquiring in our imperfect ſtate. I do not mean that every one is capable of acquiring the ſame degree of knowledge; a number of adventitious circumſtances make that impoſſible. The difference of education has a conſiderable influence on the human mind; the different manner of rearing the mind, and bringing it to maturity, will likewiſe have a conſiderable influence on the acquiſition of knowledge.---Other circumſtances might be mentioned, which affect the human mind in acquiring knowledge; but theſe that have been already mentioned, will in ſome meaſure account for the different degrees of knowledge that are found among mankind. With regard to the abſtract queſtion, Whether all minds are originally alike intelligent, or not? I will not determine: perhaps they are. But it may be affirmed, that, beſides other circumſtances that contribute much to that diverſity of knowledge we find in the world, much will likewiſe depend upon the organization of the machine, or body in which the mind is placed.

The derangement of the human faculties that we obſerve in idiots, is owing to the organi-

zation

zation of the human frame; perhaps I ſhould rather ſay, is owing to the frame which the mind organizes, and their unhappy connexion.

The human conſtitution is ſo complicated, that it cannot be thoroughly underſtood by man. How the mind operates upon matter, or the human frame; or how matter, or the organization of the body, affects the mind, we do not know; nor can the moſt profound philoſopher ſay in what manner theſe operations are conducted. We know, however, that the operations are real; that they form the human conſtitution, and fit us for all the purpoſes of active life, and for the enjoyment of a better life in a future world. With regard to futurity, and our hopes and proſpects there, they will be taken more particular notice of in another eſſay. In the mean time, it may be juſtly obſerved, that knowledge is to the mind, what light is to the eye---it is the light of the mind. It is impoſſible, and could anſwer no purpoſe, to give a definition of either. To explain how knowledge operates upon, and affects the mind, as light operates upon, and affects the eye, cannot be done with any degree of preciſion. Thoſe who know it, need none; and thoſe who do not, cannot, by the moſt elaborate account that could be given, be brought to underſtand it.

Knowledge,

Knowledge, I have already obſerved, is the light of the mind; it makes every thing perceptible and viſible, ſo far as it reaches; and inſinuates itſelf, with a certain conſciouſneſs (for every man is conſcious of what he knows) enabling the poſſeſſor of it to order and conduct the whole buſineſs of life with eaſe and pleaſure; and without it, all would be involved in confuſion and diſorder. It is ſo neceſſary for the purpoſes, even of a preſent life, that without it nothing could be done to purpoſe.

When we ſpeak of human knowledge, we muſt be underſtood to mean, not only the meaſure and degree of it, but thoſe particular kinds of it that are neceſſary for enabling us to diſcharge the proper duties of life, which muſt be attained in the manner, and by the means ſuited to the conſtitution of man, and which is deſigned by the Author of his being, to anſwer thoſe purpoſes in life by which he is diſtinguiſhed from all other beings, whether above or below him. Man cannot underſtand and act in the ſame manner that ſpirits not connected with matter do. His fund of knowledge muſt lead him to act, with propriety, that part which is aſſigned him in life by his great Creator.--- Every created being is confined to certain bounds which it cannot paſs over, without ceaſing to be what it is. To that degree of knowledge, which, from

from our conſtitution we are formed for acquiring, all the exerciſes of the moſt noble powers of *man* muſt be limited.

The preſent powers, capacity, and frame of man, are all ſuited to his ſituation, the place he holds in the univerſe, and the purpoſe he is to anſwer in it. He is fitted to anſwer all the purpoſes of life, and by the uſe of the powers he has, is capable of attaining ſuch meaſures of knowledge as will raiſe him up to ſuch dignity, as will enable him to ſet the higheſt order of created beings much below his envy.

It is of conſequence to conſider the objects we have to deal with in common life, and how far they may, in ſuch views as we can attain of them, by being improved for anſwering the higheſt and moſt valuable purpoſes in life, be brought to a ſtill higher degree of perfection.

The objects of human knowledge are almoſt infinitely varied, and are paſt numbering. They include every thing that can be brought under our obſervation, from the loweſt object in nature, till we aſcend to the Supreme Being;—and the gradations between theſe are infinite; for there is an infinite diſtance between the great Creator, who is infinite perfection, and even the moſt exalted of created beings: from this it will appear, that the objects of human knowledge are almoſt innumerable.

There

There is a beautiful diverſity in human nature, ariſing from the different taſtes, ſentiments, diſpoſitions, and, conſequently, ſtudies of mankind. It is well and wiſely ordered, as it leads to different purſuits in knowledge, for anſwering the different purpoſes of life.

It may be further obſerved, as a peculiar excellence in the ſyſtem of nature, that the ſenſible objects we may find it neceſſary to make uſe of in the acquiſition of knowledge, (and there are many we will find neceſſary for that purpoſe) are ſo beautifully arranged in proper order by their great Author, for anſwering the purpoſes they were deſigned to anſwer to man in life, that, with a proper degree of attention, we cannot miſtake the application of them. Yet there is not a more certain truth, than that they are often miſtaken or miſapplied; and hence it is, that numbers of mankind do not acquire that degree of knowledge which they might, with proper attention to nature, attain. Hence, too, is perhaps the reaſon why multitudes of mankind never think of reducing the objects of their thoughts to any tolerable order, but take them at random as they happen to occur, or as their preſent occaſions require. By this means, the powers of the mind are ſo deranged as to be involved in inextricable confuſion and diſorder,

diſorder, and conſequently become incapable of any regular improvement, and loſe all the beneſit that would ariſe from what lies ſo fairly within their view. I have formerly ſaid, that man is a compound being, compounded of matter and ſpirit: I now extend this view and ſay, the whole univerſe, ſo far as we know any thing of it, is divided into theſe two, which are with great propriety called the *material* and *ſpiritual* world. Man, by his conſtitution and frame, is connected with both:—By the one he is allied to the material world, from which he muſt derive all his ſupport for life here:—By the other he is as intimately connected with the ſpiritual world, and muſt depend for his ſupport there on the Father of ſpirits: Much information may be got from the material world, by the proper ſtudy of it; The Creator has planned it ſo, as to be of infinite ſervice to mankind; and did men know how to make the proper uſe of it, they would make much greater advances in knowledge than they do. Not to enter minutely into particulars, it may be obſerved, that the general diviſion of the ſyſtem of nature into animals, vegetables, and dead matter, is obvious and ſtriking: The ſeveral kinds of animals which inhabit earth, air, and ſea; the different tribes of plants, and trees; the ſeveral ſpecies of earths,

ſtones, minerals, &c. with their ſeveral uſes, make the ſubject of a moſt uſeful, as well as entertaining ſtudy; I mean, that of natural hiſtory. The proper ſtudy of the ſyſtem of nature would lead to a fund of knowledge which we have not yet acquired—It is the medium by which man muſt be taught knowledge.---It is earth, fire, air, and water, that man is moſt immediately connected with by his material frame, and has moſt to do with; this perhaps was the reaſon, why many of the ancient philoſophers made theſe the elements of all material ſubſtances.

But the world of ſpirits, by all who believe the exiſtence of ſpirits, and a ſpiritual world, will be allowed to be as much ſuperior to the moſt refined organized matter, as active power is ſuperior to the fineſt machinery; or as the great Creator is ſuperior to his own works. Thoſe we are moſt intimately acquainted with, and the only ones to which, in our preſent ſtate, we have acceſs, are our own minds; this opens up to us a moſt important branch of knowledge.

Notwithſtanding that veil of fleſh which every man carries about him, by which he is intimately connected with the material world, and ſecluded from all direct and immediate communication with every other order of ſpirits; yet

yet he is not confined there:---The mind is capable, by its powers, of being raiſed up to the ſpiritual world, and contemplating, though at a diſtance, the different orders of ſpirits there. I muſt obſerve further, that a way is opened up (which ſhall be more fully taken notice of afterwards) by which he may attain the knowledge of, and an acquaintance with the Father of ſpirits: Knowledge, the moſt important and intereſting to man; for he, by this knowledge, acquires a capacity and fitneſs for a different manner of living, without that dependence on ſenſe and bodily feeling, to which we are ſubjected in our preſent ſtate. The actions and paſſions of ſpirits dwelling in fleſh, as ours are, when properly directed, is the great, it may be ſaid, the only medium, by which we can be enabled to attain this excellent ſtate of life:—It is in truth a kind of low image; I mean ſuch a one as is ſuited to our preſent low condition, of the ſtate of the ſpiritual world, and the manner of living there.

In an inveſtigation of this kind, it may not be improper to obſerve, that the human mind has originally no fund of knowledge: Man is not born a rational creature, but a creature capable of rationality; it has no ideas, as they are called; innate ideas are long ſince exploded. I

mean not to enter into the abſtract queſtion about ideas, but have only made this general obſervation concerning them. The mind of man has not even the conſciouſneſs of its own exiſtence, until the impreſſions made on the appropriated parts of the animal ſyſtem excite the correſpondent perceptions; and there we muſt fix the riſe and foundation of all real knowledge, through all the ſteps and degrees of it, up to the higheſt and moſt ſublime that can be attained by man; and whatever cannot, by proper and immediate connections, be traced back to this ſource, and unleſs the impreſſion and perception can be produced on which it was founded, it may with confidence be affirmed, that it is fantaſtic and deluſive: Whatever meaſures of knowledge we may think we poſſeſs, that cannot be traced back to the original impreſſions and perceptions on which it ought to be founded, is not real knowledge, but a phantaſm which leads to the idea of poſſeſſing knowledge, while we have it not. Whoever would make a juſt eſtimate of human knowledge, and would wiſh to make real progreſs in it, muſt begin where nature begins, and carefully mark out every ſtep that is taken in the progreſs, without ever loſing ſight of the very low beginnings, from which the

the higheſt degree of improvement in knowledge muſt riſe.

It muſt be univerſally allowed as a fundamental poſition, that without the objects which have ſome how or other been brought under our obſervation, we could acquire no knowledge. Man, by his conſtitution, is capable of receiving knowledge only through the medium of his ſenſes; and his knowledge will riſe no higher, nor can it be acquired in any other manner, than ſo far as theſe objects are brought under his obſervation: What can we know but from the impreſſions we receive from external objects, and the perceptions we have from them?

Juſt ſo far as we can, by any means whatever, be enabled to perceive any kind of beings, or any particulars about it, juſt ſo far our knowledge will go, and no farther. But there are very different ways of doing this according to the different natures and conſtitutions of the objects we have to do with in life.---And as all the views we can take of them, and all the means by which we can perceive them, muſt be ſuch as ſuit our conſtitution, and are within the reach of our powers, the degrees and extent of our knowledge, will of conſequence be very differ-

ent, and ſomething muſt ly quite beyond our reach.

The firſt objects that come under our obſerva tion, are ſuch as are neceſſary for the ſupport of life;---hence a child anxiouſly ſeeks the breaſt by a natural inſtinct, which it finds neceſſary for its ſupport; and it is ſome time before the child can attend to any thing elſe. Thoſe objects that affect the eye and the ear, are commonly the next; ſuch as affect the eye by their glittering appearance, or the ſound of a rattle, engages their attention; ſuch as give pleaſure, either by relieving ſome little felt uneaſineſs, or otherways diverting, make great impreſſions, in the ſame manner; ſo does any thing that gives ſenſible pain. Whatever gives pleaſure or pain, makes a ſenſible impreſſion on the infant mind. They are attended with the effects they are by nature calculated to produce, and make the correſpondent movements, and therefore engage the whole attention; theſe make up the whole buſineſs, as they engage all the attention of the little creature. As he advances in years, and comes to be acquainted with more objects, eſpecially when he comes to be capable of obſerving the actions and ways of men, he then more fully exerts his natural talent

talent of imitation; for imitation is natural to a young mind: and as by degrees (and it is only by ſlow and imperceptible degrees) the mind and body ripens together into a capacity for the common and peculiar buſineſs and enjoyments of life,---from theſe he has new objects, and new ſources of acquiring knowledge. Theſe, it will perhaps be ſaid, are only children, and their whole conduct is engaged in childiſh things: But what is that to philoſophers? It is true, it may be below their notice: We forget that we were once children, otherwiſe we would know the progreſs of knowledge in the human mind, much better than we do.

But in children, and in them only, perhaps, it is, that we ſee human nature in its moſt undiſguiſed ſtate; and the greateſt philoſopher, however his acquaintance with, and knowledge of things muſt be greater, and conſequently the circle both of his pleaſure and buſineſs enlarged, yet, if he acts naturally, he proceeds preciſely on the ſame plan as we had occaſion to obſerve before: he muſt begin where nature begins, and muſt proceed upon the ſame natural principles.

I ſhall conclude this eſſay, with obſerving, That the philoſophy of the human mind has long been a ſubject of enquiry with the learned, and

has engaged the attention of men of the moſt diſtinguiſhed abilities. Mr Locke, in his celebrated eſſay on human underſtanding, which ſhows great force of genius, yet, without foreſeeing the conſequence of his rejecting all the ſecondary qualities of bodies, has laid the foundation of ſcepticiſm in modern philoſophy. Dr Berkley improved upon Mr Locke's ſyſtem, and carried it a ſtep further; he rejected all the primary qualities of bodies: thus matter was turned out of the world. Mr Locke did not ſee that the principles he had laid down, and endeavoured to eſtabliſh, would be attended with ſuch conſequences. Dr Berkley ſaw them well; and, to confeſs a truth, if Mr Locke's ſyſtem is admitted, it is not eaſy to anſwer Dr Berkley. But our countryman David Hume, in his eſſay on human nature, has gone ſtill farther, and, beſides rejecting the whole material ſyſtem, both the ſecondary and primary qualities of matter, he likewiſe turns ſpirit out of the world, and has left us nothing but vague uncertain ideas, to be the meaſure and ſtandard of every thing reſpecting man, both in his preſent and future ſtate of exiſtence. The beſt ſyſtem of the philoſophy of the human mind we have yet ſeen, is in a late publication by the learned and ingenuous Dr Reid,

Reid, profeſſor of moral philoſophy in the univerſity of Glaſgow. I do not mean to give any account of his plan, but only obſerve, that his manner of treating the active and mental powers of man, ſhows a degree of penetration and depth of thought that is but ſeldom to be found, and does great honour to the author.

ESSAY.

ESSAYS, &c.

ESSAY III.

On the Knowledge of God.

THE knowledge of God, is the moſt important, the moſt intereſting piece of knowledge that man can acquire. To know God as the Creator, as the moral Governor of the world, and as the God and father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; is, of all others, the moſt intereſting knowledge to man.

It is a juſt obſervation, that metaphyſical reaſoning will not lead us to the proper knowledge of God. All the knowledge of him we can acquire in that way, will make but a faint impreſſion on the mind. In order to obtain the true knowledge of God, ſuch a knowledge as is neceſſary to fit and prepare our minds for the everlaſting enjoyment of a future world, it is neceſſary that we have ſuch an account of his works and ways towards man, and the other parts of his

his creation, as will lead us to the knowledge of theſe divine perfections and powers of which he is poſſeſſed, and which we are taught to attribute to him. He has given us an account of his works, of the conduct of his providence, in the moral goverment of the world, and in the diſpenſation of grace by Jeſus Chriſt. In all theſe ways, he has manifeſted and made himſelf known to mankind.

To know God as the great Creator, the Sovereign Proprietor of heaven and earth, it is neceſſary to ſtudy attentively the volume of the viſible creation, which he has laid open to our view: It is the medium by means of which he manifeſts and makes himſelf known to his creature man:---It is the only medium, as I had occaſion to obſerve in a former eſſay, through which man can be brought to the knowledge of him: There we have evident traces of infinite power, wiſdom and goodneſs. How great, how immenſely great, muſt that power be, that could bring this ſtupendous frame of nature out of nothing into exiſtence by the word of his mouth! For he ſpake, and it was done: he commanded, and all things were eſtabliſhed. The wiſdom of God in the viſible creation is no leſs conſpicuous than his power: That infinite wiſdom which appears, upon the ſlighteſt ſurvey,

in

in the beautiful order and arrangement of all his works throughout univerſal nature, is ſo aſtoniſhingly great, ſo much beyond the comprehenſion of man, or any created being, that they can never fully comprehend it. Infinite wiſdom will ever be at an infinite diſtance above the higheſt advances that the moſt exalted created beings can make in the knowledge of it, even in their moſt perfect ſtate;—all that man knows of it in his preſent ſtate, is from ſome faint traces of it that are to be found among the moſt enlightened and wiſeſt of mankind, which falls infinitely ſhort of the great original: All we can ſay, is, that the wiſdom of man, even in his moſt perfect ſtate of exiſtence, though of the ſame nature with the wiſdom of God (for wiſdom is of the ſame nature in all beings; they only differ in degree: The wiſdom of God is infinite and unlimited: the wiſdom of any created being is limited and finite). The knowledge of God, as he is manifeſted to man in his goodneſs, merits a particular attention: his goodneſs, his tender mercies, are over all his works; I ſpeak of it here chiefly as it is manifeſted in creation, to the different orders of beings he has placed there: He liberally ſupplies the returning wants of all his creatures: He has fitted up the creation for anſwering all the purpo-

ſes of life and happineſs in his preſent ſtate to man, and the different orders of creatures he has placed there; But to man he has given a more noble and dignified uſe of the creation than to any other creature, in making it the medium by which he might be led to the knowledge of himſelf: He has likewiſe given to man language, one of the nobleſt talents mankind can boaſt of, as it is the great link or chain that connects the material and immaterial ſyſtems. He has ſtored the world with every thing neceſſary for the ſupport and comfortable ſubſiſtence of man in life, as well as the whole animal creation: Man alone is capable, from his ſuperior rank in the creation, of raiſing his views, his heart and affections, to the great Author of his being, in ſentiments of love, adoration, gratitude and praiſe, for his unbounded goodneſs.

But the knowledge of God, as he has graciouſly manifeſted himſelf to mankind in Jeſus Chriſt his bleſſed Son, is of all others the moſt important and intereſting to man. To know the love, the grace and mercy of God to mankind, manifeſted in that diſpenſation of grace which is eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt, and is laid before us in his goſpel, gives us ſuch views of God, and ſuch a knowledge of him as is no where elſe to be found:—It opens up the grandeſt

eſt proſpects, the moſt intereſting that ever was ſet before creatures of any kind, the angels in heaven not excepted; for theſe things, (meaning the œconomy of grace,) we are told, the angels deſire to look into. The words in the original are very ſignificant, ſtrong and expreſſive; they ſignify a prying keenneſs to ſee into and underſtand the whole conſtitution of grace as it is eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt: Well might the Apoſtle exclaim, "O the height and the depth, "the breadth and length of the love of God "and of Chriſt Jeſus!" It paſſeth knowledge; there is a height and depth, a breadth and length in it that no created mind can fully comprehend or underſtand. With regard to man—If we conſider it in its origin as laid by infinite wiſdom from eternal ages,—in its firſt intimation to man,—in its gradual progreſs, and clearer diſcoveries of it to the ſucceeding ages of the world,—in its meridian glory and ſplendor upon earth by the actual exhibition of Jeſus Chriſt in the fleſh,---in its final accompliſhment;---the great purpoſes to be anſwered by it:---Conſidering it in all theſe different views, the full knowledge of it is much beyond the reach of the powers of any of the ſons of men. The more perfect knowledge of it, and of God, as he has manifeſted himſelf there, muſt be reſerved as a

fund of everlaſting entertainment in the regions of perfect love and knowledge: But the great lines, the leading principles, the doctrines and precepts of the goſpel, in which this gracious diſpenſation of grace is laid before us, are there delineated with ſo much plainneſs and ſimplicity, that by proper care and attention in examining them, we may acquire all the knowledge of them, and all the knowledge of God, as he has there manifeſted himſelf to man, as the God of love and goodneſs, in all theſe amiable perfections and excellencies; in a word, in all thoſe intereſting views of himſelf, by which he has made himſelf known to man. I ſay it again, by examining with proper care and attention the important plan of revelation, as it is laid before us in the goſpel, we may acquire that knowledge of it, and all that knowledge of God, as he is there manifeſted, as is neceſſary for us to know in our preſent imperfect ſtate; as much, if properly improved, as will prepare our minds for a more perfect knowledge, and a more perfect enjoyment of him in our more perfect ſtate of exiſtence. When I mention examining the plan of revelation with proper care and attention, I ſpeak of them as I would do of that care and attention which is neceſſary for acquiring the knowledge of any art or ſcience in common

common life: but ſomething greatly more than this is neceſſary. One may acquire a very thorough knowledge of an art or ſcience, without making the proper uſe of that knowledge for anſwering the great pupoſes that art or ſcience is intended to anſwer in life:---In the ſame manner, one may, by ſtudy and application, acquire a tolerable fund of knowledge of the important truths of revelation, without applying that knowledge ſo as to anſwer the great purpoſes which the knowledge of theſe important truths were intended to anſwer, the ſalvation and happineſs of man. In order, therefore, to attain that knowledge of God which the importance of this great truth demands, we muſt form our hearts and lives on that goſpel in which theſe truths are contained: in a word, to attain that knowledge of God which revelation is intended to give us, our hearts and lives muſt be formed upon that all perfect model, the life and character of the bleſſed Jeſus, the perfect pattern of all holineſs, virtue, and goodneſs; and juſt ſo far as we are like him, ſo far we have that knowledge of God which theſe diſcoveries he has made of himſelf in the conſtitution of grace was intended to communicate to man. To know God, therefore, is to know him as the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. The

apoſtle's words are ſtrong and ſignificant,--" God " who at firſt commanded the light to ſhine out " of darkneſs, hath ſhined into our hearts to give " us the light of the knowledge of the glory of " God as it ſhines in the face of Jeſus Chriſt." There he has, in a peculiar manner, manifeſted his glory; and the knowledge of him, as he is there manifeſted, is the higheſt degree of knowledge that man can acquire of God, either in his preſent, or future and more perfect ſtate of exiſtence.

Before I leave this, I muſt take notice of another remarkable expreſſion of the ſame Apoſtle's :---" We all with open face beholding as in a " glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed into " the ſame image from glory to glory by the ſpirit " of the Lord." I have only to obſerve upon this, that the goſpel is the glaſs in which we behold this glory; and the very beholding of it has a changing, a transforming power: No more is neceſſary, to be changed or transformed into the ſame image or likeneſs, but to behold it as ſet before us in the glaſs of the goſpel; it is much the ſame with what another apoſtle has told us, " It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be, but " we know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall " be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is." Here the apoſtle evidently reſts our being made like

like him, upon ſeeing him as he is, intimating that no more is neceſſary in order to our being made like him, but juſt to ſee him as he is: But it is to be obſerved, that this view of him has a very ſignificant and extenſive meaning; it takes in a comprehenſive view of the whole plan of ſalvation through him, with a lively faith in him as the great Saviour of mankind; and here, we have the moſt perfect knowledge of God, it is poſſible for human nature to arrive at. Let me juſt further obſerve,—in this likeneſs to Chriſt, by ſeeing him as he is, the perfection of the Chriſtian life conſiſts; it is the life and ſoul of true religion, and the higheſt perfection and glory of human nature.

We talk of *being* and of *life*, but we know not what they are. What conſtitutes *being*, we cannot ſay; there muſt, we know, be certain modifications of matter in our conſtitution, and in the whole animal creation, to conſtitute *being*; but then we are as ignorant of what conſtitutes the eſſence of *matter*, as of being. All that we know of matter, is only ſome of its properties and effects; but as to what conſtitutes the eſſence of it, we know nothing. We know as little what *life* is;---What conſtitutes the eſſence of life, no philoſopher that ever breathed the

the air has been able to ſay; all we know of it, is by ſome of its effects and operations, in the world, the theatre of common life: farther than theſe we cannot go, after all our reſearches: We think little of life: Like all other things that are univerſal and common, it is not minded: we have life, and we think no further about it, but to make it as comfortable and happy as we can. Whence came life? We are told that God breathed into the firſt man the breath of life.

Life came from the great Author of life, who gives and communicates life to all his creatures; from God himſelf, who is the ſole proprietor of *life* and *being*: and let me obſerve, the communicating life to dead inactive matter is as convincing a proof of divine power, as creation itſelf; little as we think of it, it is in truth a creation, an exertion of divine power, equal to creative power. Did we know theſe, I mean *life* and *being*, we might poſſibly form ſome conception of what God is; but as we do not know them, we muſt reſt ſatisfied with that knowledge of him that we can acquire from his works and ways towards man; theſe are the medium by which he has choſen to make himſelf known to man; and it is by theſe alone, that, in our preſent ſtate, we can come to the knowledge of him.

him. God is the ſupreme poſſeſſor and proprietor of life, and conſequently of all meaſures and degrees of perfection : The nearer, therefore, we can riſe our thoughts or conceptions to this, which always ſuppoſes life and all its powers, the nearer we will approach to right conceptions of the incomprehenſible God.

He has graciouſly condeſcended to give an authentic hiſtory of himſelf, of his works and ways to man, by which he has diſcovered himſelf in his true character, and all the perfections which belong to him.

We, in our imperfect ſtate, may be forced to apprehend the divine perfections ſeparately, or in different views ; but they are all one in the divine eſſence : Perfect *being* is perfect *power ;* and it is impoſſible to conceive of perfect power, without ſeeing abſolute perfection ſubſiſting in the moſt perfect manner.

I have endeavoured to ſhow the manner and means by which we can acquire the knowledge of God ; and I believe, upon the ſtricteſt enquiry, they will be found to be the only means by which we can come at the knowledge of him.

ESSAY

ESSAYS, &c.

ESSAY IV.

On Faith.

MUCH has been wrote, and much has been ſaid about *Faith*: It is in every one's mouth, and yet, to this day, it is not well underſtood. The thoughtleſs and giddy give themſelves little trouble about it. The more ſerious and thinking part of mankind are miſled by dark, ambiguous, and I will add, ſometimes unjuſt repreſentations of it. It has been wrapt up in ſo much myſticiſm and obſcurity, that no one could know well what to make of it. Pity it is that any of the important truths of divine revelation, which are there delivered with ſo much plainneſs and ſimplicity, ſhould be ſo much obſcured and rendered unintelligible by man.

Faith ſuppoſes a teſtimony given, ſomething we are required to believe, and juſt ſo far as we can

can depend on the veracity of him who teſtifies, ſo far our faith or belief in the thing teſtified will go, and no farther. We know that act of our own minds, when we believe the teſtimony of an honeſt man, who, we are ſure, has neither intereſt nor inclination to deceive us. Without ſuch a mutual faith and confidence among men, the buſineſs of life could not be conducted nor carried on. Happily for mankind, the human mind is ſo formed, as to receive evidence and conviction, as ſtrong and convincing, from teſtimony, as in any other way. I am as certain there is ſuch a continent as America, as I am that the radii of a circle are equal. The one depends upon teſtimony, and the other upon mathematical demonſtration; but they are equally ſtrong and concluſive. I mention this to ſhew the power and force of evidence, ariſing from teſtimony. From what has been obſerved, it will appear, that faith, of any kind depends upon teſtimony, for there can be no faith, where no teſtimony is given.

Let it be further obſerved, that believing or not believing are not things in our own powers; our faith or believing muſt depend upon the light and evidence with which the thing to be believed is attended. I cannot believe that while I am writing this, I have not a table and

a candle before me, becauſe I have ocular demonſtration of the contrary; I cannot believe, as an hiſtorical fact, that Julius Cæſar was not aſſaſſinated in the ſenate-houſe, becauſe I have all the evidence that can ariſe from teſtimony; I mean all the evidence of authentic hiſtory, to believe the contrary.

Thus it appears, that faith of every kind depends on teſtimony, (I now ſpeak of faith in general) and there muſt be a ſufficient degree of light and evidence, attending every thing propoſed to be believed, in order to gain our aſſent, or lead us to the belief of it. We have ſeen the nature of human teſtimony among men, the nature of the evidence ariſing from it, and the neceſſity there is for it, for conducting the buſineſs of common life. Let us now apply this to the divine teſtimony, and ſee if we cannot make out ſomething of a clear and diſtinct account of the faith which is required of us in the goſpel.

Faith, as it ſtands deſcribed and recommended to us in the divine record, is a firm and aſſured confidence in God, founded in the firm belief of the divine record and teſtimony he hath given us concerning his Son, that eternal life is in him, and that he who hath the ſon, hath life.--- The foundation of this, from belief and confidence in the divine teſtimony, is laid ſo ſtrong,

with ſuch infallible documents of the truth and faithfulneſs of God, that without doing violence to our own minds, we cannot reſiſt the force of the evidence with which it is attended. In the hiſtory of divine revelation, we have the characters of God inſtructed by the moſt ſenſible documents, the moſt infallible proofs,---his works and ways with men. The Bible, eſpecially the Old Teſtament, is not properly a hiſtory of the Jewiſh nation, but the hiſtory of God; by which I mean, the hiſtory of his works and ways with men, and the different methods he has taken for carrying on that diſpenſation of grace which he has eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt. I cannot omit obſerving, what merits our ſerious attention,--That the conſtitution of grace, as it is eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt, is a conſtitution worthy of God to plan, worthy of the Bleſſed Son of God to execute, worthy of the Bleſſed Spirit of Grace to apply to the hearts of men; and every way ſuited to the caſe and circumſtances of fallen creatures. In theſe ways and works of his, has God manifeſted himſelf to mankind, and it ought to be particularly noticed, the ample proviſions he has made, and the comprehenſive promiſe and grant he hath given of eternal life.

All this is rendered not only credible, but infallibly certain, by the perfection, the faithfulneſs

fulneſs and power of the promiſer; eſpecially if we conſider that aſtoniſhing grace and love which he has manifeſted to mankind in his Bleſſed Son Jeſus Chriſt, who is the foundation and ſurety of the promiſe, and of all the bleſſings it contains.

The Bleſſed Son of God came down from heaven to earth, on the moſt gracious and merciful deſign, to ſave fallen man. This he accompliſhed, by his heavenly doctrines, teaching and inſtructing an ignorant benighted world: for the world at that time was ſunk in the groſſeſt ignorance and ſuperſtition: the knowledge of the true God was loſt, not only among the heathen nations, but among God's own people: the traditions of the elders were univerſally taught, and infinitely more regarded than the oracles of truth. Perhaps no period, from the creation of the world down to this time, diſcovered a more gloomy and diſmal picture of the univerſal corruption, degeneracy and ignorance of mankind, than this period when our Saviour appeared. And this leads to an obſervation which it is very natural to make:—It was a ſignal interpoſition of divine providence, that at the very time when the world was ſo univerſally ſunk in darkneſs and ignorance,—at that very time Jeſus Chriſt, he who was to be the light

of the world ſhould appear, to enlighten the worldby the heavenly doctrines which he taught. Our Bleſſed Saviour further taught and inſtructed the world by the divine precepts which he gave for regulating the conduct in life, and which are laid down in his goſpel: They are plain and ſimple, eaſy to be underſtood, and have a native tendency to form the heart to the love and practice of all that virtue and goodneſs of the whole of that conduct in life, which he requires of his ſincere followers: They are happily calculated for anſwering theſe purpoſes; for they are the pureſt ſyſtem of precepts, and contain the pureſt ſyſtem of morality, that ever the world knew.

Laſt of all, our Bleſſed Saviour finiſhed the great,—the important work that was given him by his Heavenly Father to do, and which he came into the world to accompliſh, by the all-perfect ſacrifice of his Bleſſed Self upon the croſs.—There he could, as he did ſay, It is finiſhed.---The croſs of Chriſt is the glory of human nature.---There he has laid a foundation firm and ſure for our faith and hope in him.---It took four thouſand years to prepare the world for the advent of the Meſſiah; and who knows what time it will yet take to finiſh the great plan of providence, reſpecting that diſpenſation

of

of grace which is eſtabliſhed in him; This, however, we know,---it ſhall at laſt be fully accompliſhed; the material ſyſtem will be kept in its preſent ſtate till that is done, till all the great purpoſes it was intended to anſwer are fully anſwered, to the glory of God the Father, and of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.

From theſe obſervations, (for with all of them faith is intimately connected), it is obvious, that faith, or truſt, hope, and confidence in God, muſt begin at Jeſus Chriſt,---the ſure, the only ſure foundation on which it can ſtand; and where faith in Chriſt is, where it is eſtabliſhed lively and ſtrong in him, as the Son of God, and great Saviour of the world, there naturally and neceſſarily our faith and hope in God will follow upon it It is impoſſible it can be otherways: God has laid the foundation of our faith in Chriſt, by the way he has manifeſted himſelf to mankind in him, ſo ſtrong, that whoever ſincerely believes in Jeſus Chriſt, muſt of neceſſity have the firmeſt truſt, hope and confidence in God, as the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and as our God and Father in him.

The great buſineſs of mankind is to believe in and receive by faith Jeſus Chriſt, as he is given of the Father, as he gives himſelf to every one that will receive him, ſo as to receive eternal

life,

life, all the fulneſs of the eternal God in him. I have only to add, that the faith I have been treating of, is the effect of the operation of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of Men, which we are commanded to aſk and receive :---It is that faith that purifies the heart, that worketh by love, that giveth a victory over the world, as it is expreſſed in the language of inſpiration, and will manifeſt itſelf in all the fruits of holineſs and new obedience.

ESSAYS,

ESSAYS, &c.

ESSAY V.

On the Love of God.

THE love of God will naturally and neceſſarily flow from faith or believing in him. If we believe in God, as he has manifeſted himſelf to mankind in his Bleſſed Son, Jeſus Chriſt, we muſt of neceſſity, love him.—Of neceſſity did I ſay?---yes, of neceſſity.---But where is the neceſſity, ſome may ſay? Why ſhould we naturally, and of neceſſity, be led to the love of God, when we know there are thouſands in the world who do not love him?

It is not intended here to enquire into the different ſtates of mankind, with regard to virtue and vice: It has been already obſerved, that this love will naturally ariſe from faith, or believing in God; and where this faith or believing is, the heart will be formed to the love of virtue and

and goodneſs; of all that is worthy, amiable and excellent in life: And who can doubt but that there is worth and excellence among men? Where the love of theſe are, it will of neceſſity lead the heart to the great Author of all goodneſs, the fountain of life and happineſs. Our love will be in proportion to our faith or believing in him: juſt ſo far as we believe in God, juſt ſo far we will love him, and no farther. An inſpired writer has told us, that God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him: the expreſſion is remarkably ſtrong, and merits attention: What are we to underſtand by dwelling in God? The loweſt view we can take of it, is, that the heart is formed to the love of God, and of goodneſs, and finds its greateſt happineſs ariſe from thus loving, and doing the will of God, and in being formed up to a likeneſs to him. What are we to underſtand by God dwelling in us? What can we underſtand by it, but that he dwells in the hearts of men, by his Bleſſed Spirit, raiſing them up to thoſe ſentiments and diſpoſitions of heart, thoſe views of God that have been already mentioned.

From theſe obſervations, it will evidently appear, that the love of God, as he has manifeſted himſelf to mankind, is the nobleſt, the moſt elevated

elevated, and moſt worthy ſentiment that can animate the human heart.

Let it therefore be the greateſt buſineſs of mankind, to cultivate this diſpoſition, to be ever under the influence of this heavenly and divine principle, that it may ſuitably influence all their conduct in life.

After theſe general obſervations, it may be of ſome conſequence to conſider the grounds of our love to God, and the obligations, ariſing from theſe, we are laid under to love him.

He is the great Author of univerſal nature, and the great Creator of all his creatures that exiſt in it. He has life in himſelf. He is the great Author of life. He gives and communicates life to all his creatures, and he is the great ſupporter and maintainer of it. We perhaps think little of life, becauſe we ſee it univerſal through nature; and we think little more about it, but to make ſuch proviſion as we can for its ſupport. We know nothing of what conſtitutes the eſſence of life: we only know it by ſome of its effects, which we ſee. But what life in the abſtract is, no man breathing can ſay. Yet life and being is an invaluable bleſſing. We have it from God, who is the great ſource and Author of life; and that life we have from him ought to raiſe in our hearts the warmeſt ſentiments

timents of love, affection, and gratitude, to the great Author of it. Did we know the extent of creating power, which no finite mind can comprehend, and did we know the value of life, and being, and the great purpoſes it is intended to anſwer to man,---happineſs in our preſent ſtate, ariſing from the exerciſe of virtue and true goodneſs, and the hopes and proſpects of eternal happineſs in the world to come;--did we feel the divine power and influence which theſe ought to have upon the human heart; how would the heart expand itſelf toward the great Author of life and being? How would it be filled with tranſports of admiration, love and gratitude to the great Creator, the Author of all the happineſs that is in his creation.

We are told by the inſpired writer already mentioned, that we love him becauſe he firſt loved us. In what manner has God manifeſted his love to men? The heart of man cannot conceive the extent of that love and goodneſs which he hath manifeſted to mankind, and to his whole creation, as the great Creator. Man, he has diſtinguiſhed in a peculiar manner, by the noble and dignified powers of mind with which he has endowed him. Man is made capable of being raiſed up to the knowledge and

love

love of God, and to the full enjoyment of him. To theſe powers of mind, and our being made capable of being raiſed up to ſuch perfection and happineſs, the Creator hath given to man the power of ſpeech---language: this is a talent too much overlooked, becauſe it is ſo common among men: yet it is one of the nobleſt talents that mankind can boaſt of.

Language, taken in its utmoſt extent, is the univerſe ſubſiſting in ſound. It is expreſſive of, and a verbal repreſentation of the different objects in nature for conveying the knowledge or nature of them to man. It is by language that we are capable of communicating our views of the objects of nature, and our ideas concerning them to one another.

All that we know of nature is repreſented both to the ſenſes and the mind, by language; But language does much more.---It is the great link or chain which connects the material and ſpiritual ſyſtems. It has been obſerved, in a former eſſay, that there is an intimate connexion between theſe two ſyſtems, and that we are inſtructed in the knowledge of the one, through the medium of the other. It is language which connects them, and hence leads us to the knowledge of the ſpiritual world.

From

From theſe views of God as the Creator, and the noble powers he hath beſtowed on man, his creature, he hath manifeſted himſelf to be Love, and has thereby laid a foundation for ſupreme love and affection to him. Let it be further obſerved, that God has manifeſted himſelf to be love, in that gracious providence which he exerciſes in the government of his creation. He created the world by infinite power, and he continues to uphold, to preſerve and govern it in the perfection of wiſdom and goodneſs. It is not intended here to give a minute account of providence; that would require an eſſay by itſelf: all that is meant is to give a general view of it.

With regard to the mechaniſm of the ſyſtem of nature, by which all its operations are conducted and carried on with ſuch regularity and order, ſo as to anſwer all the purpoſes it was intended to anſwer by the Creator; let it be obſerved in general, that theſe operations in the ſyſtem of the univerſe, are under the direction of divine providence, and are conducted by infinite power and wiſdom.

Some have ſuppoſed, and have ſaid, that the Deity immediately interpoſes, by his divine agency, in carrying on theſe operations: I would rather be inclined to think, that the ſyſtem of nature was originally conſtructed by the Creator,

ſo

ſo perfect and compleat, that all the operations of nature ſhould be, and are carried on, without his immediate interpoſition :---This is a philoſophical diſquiſition, and I leave it to be determined by philoſophers. What I had chiefly in view, is that good providence by which the returning wants of the whole creation are ſo liberally ſupplied :---This lays men under the ſtrongeſt obligations to the love of God, as their preſerver and ſupporter in life. Man, thoughtleſs man, imagines he procures all theſe ſupports for himſelf, in ſome ſenſe, independent of the Creator; Let it be remembered, as a ſterling truth not to be diſputed, that all the ſupports and comforts of life man enjoys, are neither more nor leſs to him than the bleſſing of God makes them to be: it is that which puts virtue and efficacy into theſe, ſo as they may anſwer the great purpoſes of ſupport and comfort in life to him.

From every view we can poſſibly take of the Creator and Governor of the world, he has manifeſted himſelf to be love and goodneſs to his creatures; and mankind, if their hearts are formed to the love God, have all that happineſs to expect from him, which they are conſtitutionally formed for, and made capable of enjoying.

Theſe bleſſed ſpirits who ſurround the throne of God, love him with an ardour of which we can have no conception: it may be ſaid, they are perfect; man is not: therefore it is no wonder they ſhould love God in a manner much ſuperior to what man is capable of.

Did we know the whole plan of the moral government of God; his manner of exerciſing and diſpenſing that government to his creation,---we would ſee, we would feel, the obligations we are laid under to love God, ſuperior to thoſe of angels themſelves. But this view of the divine government we cannot acquire in our preſent imperfect ſtate. Theſe obſervations, if attended to, will lead us to the moſt amiable views of God, and to the ſtrong obligations we are under to love him.---But theſe will appear more fully in the next ſection.

The moſt aſtoniſhing diſplay of the love of God to man, where he has in a peculiar manner manifeſted himſelf to be *Love*, is in that *Conſtitution of Grace* which he has graciouſly eſtabliſhed in his Bleſſed Son, Jeſus Chriſt, for the ſalvation, the happineſs of fallen man: There he has in a peculiar manner manifeſted his glory, and his love to men: This conſtitution opens up ſuch views of God, and of that love and grace which he has manifeſted to mankind, as never

never was ſet before creatures of any kind, not the higheſt angels excepted.

How aſtoniſhingly great was that love which led the father of goodneſs to plan the ſcheme of man's redemption by Jeſus Chriſt, and to leave room for the execution of it in the grand plan of his works!

How great was the love which the great Saviour of the world, the ſon of God, has manifeſted to mankind, in veiling for a time that glory which he had with the father from eternal ages, aſſuming our nature, and coming down from heaven to earth on the moſt gracious and merciful deſign!---To be the great Saviour of mankind,---to accompliſh the great, the important work that was given him of his heavenly Father to do, and which he finiſhed by the ſacrifice he offered up of himſelf upon the croſs. With great propriety, it may be ſaid, in the language of an inſpired writer, there is a height and depth, a breadth and length in this love, that no created mind can fully comprehend or underſtand.

It is not intended to give a full and extenſive view of the conſtitution of grace here; that will be the ſubject of another eſſay; all that is meant, is to give ſuch a view of it, as will raiſe the hearts of men to theſe tranſports of love to the God and father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and

our God and father in him, that are worthy of human nature:---And who can feel the divine power and influence of redeeming love and goodneſs, as it is ſet before us in the goſpel, without feeling that ſupreme love to God which is the moſt worthy and exalted ſentiment that can animate the heart of man?

ESSAYS

ESSAYS, &c.

ESSAY VI.

On the Character of Jeſus Chriſt, with a View of the Diſpenſation of grace to Man, through Him.

HISTORIOGRAPHERS and hiſtory-writers, commonly characterize the principal perſonages concerned in tranſactions they either have related, or are to relate; ſome, as Salluſt and others, begin their hiſtory with theſe characters, that mankind may be led from them, to judge what ſort of conduct they have to expect from the perſons thus characterized in the body of the hiſtory: others finiſh the hiſtory with ſumming up the characters, as drawn from the facts they have deſcribed. It is not my intention to enquire which of theſe is done with the greateſt propriety; what is chiefly to be regarded in either caſe, is to get at the true character.

The character of Jeſus Chriſt is the moſt extraordinary that ever appeared on the theatre of human nature; it is not like that of other men;—from his birth only to his death, that period, indeed, conſtitutes an eſſential part of his character, but is far from being the whole. It has a retroſpect, and looks a great way backward for many ages, before he made his appearance in the world; and a boundleſs proſpect, by looking forward after he left it. We have his hiſtory given us in the moſt authentic manner that any hiſtory ever was.—It is authenticated by the divine teſtimony, as it is given us in the divine record:—That record which God has given us concerning his Bleſſed Son, the credibility of which is the foundation of all our enquiries in matters of religion; and who can doubt the credibility of the record and teſtimony of the God of truth? It is not intended to enquire into the grounds and evidences of this record, or of the hiſtory and character of Jeſus Chriſt, as it is given us there, but to take it as it lies before us, in that record concerning him, which is made by the peculiar direction and influence of the Spirit of truth.

If we look back for the origin of his hiſtory, we find it nearly co-eval with creation itſelf. I ſpeak now of the firſt opening of the conſtitution

tion of grace to fallen man, in that early and firſt promiſe, *The ſeed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the head of the ſerpent.* The account we have of this, as given us by Moſes, is ſhort and conciſe; but, with the additional lights thrown upon it in the progreſs, the gradual opening up, the clearer views given us of divine revelation, the full import of that promiſe is clear, and perfectly well underſtood by us; and, we may be ſure, was perfectly well underſtood by thoſe to whom it was addreſſed. Did we know the perfect happineſs the firſt pair enjoyed in paradiſe, in full communion with, and enjoyment of God, their bountiful Creator, the fountain of life, and of all that happineſs that man, by his conſtitution, is made capable of enjoying; I ſay, did we know the full extent and perfection of that happineſs they there enjoyed: and did we know, at the ſame time, the extreme anguiſh of mind they muſt feel on the loſs of it,—the loſs, for any thing they knew, of all proſpects of happineſs of any kind, for ever; and nothing but the diſmal, the gloomy proſpect of being for ever cut off from God, the fountain of life and happineſs: had we the ſame views of theſe that they muſt have had, we would know that it muſt have been ſomething very ſtrong and explicit, from the Creator, and well underſtood by them, that could give them the ſmalleſt glimpſe

glimpſe of hope, or ſo much as render exiſtence itſelf ſupportable. This we find is accordingly given by the gracious and merciful Creator, to his fallen creature, man.

The hiſtory of the fall is well known to every one, and therefore needs not be recited; but the conſequences of it merit a particular attention: The firſt thing we meet with, is, that the eyes of our firſt parents were opened,---opened to ſee their loſt, ruined, and miſerably wretched ſtate. Conſcious of this, they endeavour to hide themſelves from the preſence of God, with whom they had formerly converſed ſo familiarly, but from whom, as they now thought, they had nothing good to hope for, or expect. Diſmal, and beyond all deſcription, diſtreſſing ſtate! But their gracious and merciful Creator did not leave them long in this miſerable and wretched ſituation. He called them into judgment, and pronounced ſentence upon them, very different from what they had to expect---This leads to what has been already mentioned, the firſt intimation of grace and mercy to man, contained in the ſentence pronounced againſt the ſerpent: "I will put enmity between thy ſeed, and her "(the woman's) ſeed; it ſhall bruiſe thy head, "and thou ſhalt bruiſe his heel." A promiſe full of the moſt aſtoniſhing diſcoveries of divine

love,

love, grace and mercy, to fallen man; and, as has been already obſerved, well underſtood by him. This was the opening or firſt view of the conſtitution of grace, as it is eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt, for the ſalvation of man: and we may be ſure ſuch a view of it was then given, by the all merciful Creator, as led our firſt parents to that lively faith in the promiſed ſeed, and theſe lively hopes of eternal life through him, that we find required in the goſpel. This conſtitution of grace, were it well underſtood, opens up the grandeſt views that ever was ſet before creatures of any kind, angels not excepted; for it is as much above the comprehenſion of angels as of men. Theſe things, meaning the whole œconomy of grace, we are told, the angels deſire to look into. The original word is ſignificant, and means a prying keenneſs to look into, and thoroughly to underſtand it; but it is ſuch as no created mind can ever fully comprehend or underſtand.

The plan of man's redemption, or this divine conſtitution of grace, eſtabliſhed as it is in Jeſus Chriſt, the bleſſed and eternal Son of God, was laid by infinite wiſdom, from eternal ages; and the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt left room for the execution of it, in the grand plan of his works.

Immediately

Immediately after man's firſt tranſgreſſion, this plan, as we have already ſeen, begins to open. And here properly begins the hiſtory and character of Jeſus Chriſt, as the Son of God, and great Saviour of the world; a character which is kept in view for upwards of four thouſand years; for it took all that time to prepare the world for his coming into it.

Let us now return to take a view of ſome other conſequences of the firſt tranſgreſſion. We are told, our firſt parents were driven out of paradiſe, their former ſeat of happineſs, and that there was placed at the eaſt of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming ſword, to guard the way to the tree of life. This intereſting piece of ſacred hiſtory has been ſadly mangled. The expulſion of our firſt parents from paradiſe, has been repreſented as an act of great cruelty in the Creator. Commiſerating the hapleſs pair, in being driven from their ſeat of bliſs, where they had enjoyed ſuch exquiſite happineſs, and a ſtrong guard, as it has been repreſented, placed to frighten them from returning:—This has been called cruel. Returning to what!--to enjoy their forfeited life and happineſs!--That was gone, irrecoverably gone; and neither Adam, nor his deſcendants, could live by that grant of life that was made to him

at

at his creation: But they had much happier proſpects before them: a new grant of life was made in Jeſus Chriſt, the promiſed ſeed; and they had a lively repreſentation of this before them, in the figure that was placed at the eaſt of Eden: Can any one ſeriouſly think that it was placed there, only with a view to be a bugbear to prevent our firſt parents from returning into paradiſe? None ſurely. It was placed there with infinitely higher views, and to anſwer infinitely higher purpoſes: views and purpoſes infinitely more worthy of God, and infinitely more intereſting to man. The narrative we have of this by Moſes is ſhort, but was unqueſtionably well underſtood then, as well as by after ages, by tradition. The figure, we are told, was the cherubims, the ſame figure that was afterwards placed in the tabernacle, and laſt of all in the temple, in the holieſt of all. It is worthy of attention, that the cherubims, for there were two of them, were made out of the ſame pure gold with the *mercy-ſeat*, one at each end of it, and with their wings overſhadowed it;---and who does not know that this was an emblematical repreſentation of the whole œconomy of grace, as it is graciouſly eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt? Thus, our firſt parents had before them a lively view, an emblematical repreſentation

preſentation of the conſtitution of grace. But ſomething is ſtill wanting to complete the view;—the words, which our tranſlators have rendered *flaming ſword*, to thoſe who underſtand the original, ſignifies only a killing weapon.—It is further added, That the Lord God made coats of ſkins, and cloathed them. Whence came theſe ſkins? No animal food was then eat. Doubtles, ſacrifice was there offered before the figure of the cherubim, as a type and figure of that great ſacrifice, that in the fulneſs of time was to be offered up for the ſins of men; and our firſt parents being cloathed with the ſkins of the beaſts offered in ſacrifice, was emblematical of their being taken under the covert of the great ſacrifice, and of their being entered upon that new life, the grant of which is made in Jeſus Chriſt, the beginning and head of the new creation of God.--- Inſtead, therefore, of the expulſion of our firſt parents from paradiſe being, as it has been termed, an act of great cruelty, I conſider it as an act of the greateſt mercy. Let theſe two different views of this tranſaction be candidly conſidered; and I hope it will appear, that to view it as an act of mercy, is more worthy of the God of infinite grace and mercy, than to ſuppoſe he drove them out in indignation and wrath, to a fatherleſs deſolate world; and

and then left them abandoned to misery and wretchedness, unprotected, unsupported: Can we suppose, that the God of perfect love, and perfect goodness, who had made such ample provision for the happiness of his creation, in the dispensation of grace by Jesus Christ, would not instruct his new made, and now fallen creature, man, in the knowledge of that constitution of grace he had graciously established in his blessed Son, and the manner of living by him, so as to be fitted up for endless happiness in a future world?

Let me ask again, Is it possible to suppose the gracious and merciful Creator did not instruct Adam in the knowledge of all this? It certainly is not: And what more rational and probable way of his being so instructed, than that which has been mentioned?

I have said, we have every reason to believe that sacrifice was offered before the cherubim. Here, then, we have the origin of that institution; not, as some have very injudiciously alleged, that God was pleased to indulge his selected people, among whom the worship of the true God was to be kept up, in compliance with the customs of their heathen neighbours, of which they were very fond; thus placing the origin of sacrifice among the heathen nations. It is

truly aſtoniſhing, that men of ſenſe ſhould be capable of ſuppoſing what is ſo glaringly abſurd. To think of atoning, or placating the Deity by ſacrifice, is ſo repugnant to human nature, that it would never have entered into the heart or head of man, had it not been a divine inſtitution; and hence the origin of all the ſacrifices that ever were in the world.

We know that ſacrifices conſtitute a very eſſential part of the Old Teſtament worſhip.—They were numerous and various;—but that which chiefly merits our attention, is that great ſacrifice which the high prieſt offered up once a year on the great day of attonement, in the Holy of Holies, before the mercy ſeat and the Cherubims; this was in a peculiar manner emblematical of, and in a lively manner repreſented to the believing worſhippers, that great ſacrifice;—the ſacrifice which the Bleſſed Son of God, and great Saviour of the world, was to offer up of himſelf upon the croſs; and by which he was to put an end to all future ſacrifices.

I have juſt hinted, that the official character of Jeſus Chriſt, as Saviour of the world, was kept in view four thouſand years before he made his appearance in it: The ſacrifices already mentioned, particularly the great expiatory ſacrifice, had a ſtrong, a direct tendency to keep

up

up a lively view of this character; and from ſeveral circumſtances that have been too much overlooked, it was much better underſtood by the believing worſhippers, than, at this diſtance of time, we imagine.

We have many typical and figurative repreſentations of him among the patriarchs, which I do not now enumerate: But the call of Abraham was very extraordinary, and deſerves a particular attention, as it muſt have been attended with undoubted evidence that it came from God: And what chiefly deſerves our notice, is the promiſe of a peculiar *ſeed*, in whom all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed. It is by no means neceſſary to prove, what the event has made ſo plain and evident,—that this ſeed was the ſame divine perſon already mentioned, and who afterwards appeared in the world under the name of *Jeſus Chriſt*. It is proper to obſerve here, that the original promiſe of the ſeed of the woman, which had formerly lain in common among the children of *Shem*, then came to be limited to Abraham and his deſcendants; the higheſt privilege and dignity that could be conferred on any of mankind. In after times, we find this promiſe farther limited, firſt to the family of Jacob, and laſt of all to the family of David, where it ſtood till the promiſe was com-

pletely fulfilled in the perſonal appearance of *Jeſus Chriſt*. This great promiſe was the foundation of all that faith and hope in God, which was ever found among any of the children of Adam: It was therefore well authenticated, not only to Abraham himſelf, by the accompliſhment of ſeveral other promiſes made to him, particuliarly of the birth of Iſaac, at a time when nothing but the direct interpoſal of divine power could have rendered this great event even poſſible; but Abraham believed that he was faithful who had promiſed, and that what he had promiſed, he was fully able to perform; he was not diſappointed in his hope, nor will any who ever truſted in God: Sarah brought forth a ſon to whom all the promiſes made to Abraham and his poſterity were confined; particularly that great promiſe, that in his ſeed all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed. Thus, all who would give attention, had ſenſible pledges of the faithfulneſs and almighty power of God for making good the great promiſe of that ſeed, in whom all the families of the earth were to be bleſſed, and thereby ſupporting their faith and hope in God, as their God, and thoſe eternal bleſſings ſecured to them in the promiſed ſeed, Jeſus Chriſt

It

It would ſwell this eſſay much beyond my firſt intention, to take notice of the manner in which this *promiſe* was authenticated and confirmed to *Jacob*, and other patriarchs; to conſider each of them minutely would require a volume. But I have ſaid they had the faith and hope of eternal life ſecured to them in the promiſed ſeed, Jeſus Chriſt. It is of conſequence to take particular notice of this: We have been told by very reſpectable authorities, that under the whole Old Taſtement diſpenſation, their views and hopes extended no further than a preſent life, becauſe all the promiſes made to them from time to time, even that great promiſe of their poſſeſſing the land of Canaan, which is ſometimes called the land of Promiſe, were of a temporal nature; and that therefore their views were confined to a preſent life only, without any proſpect of futurity, and the glorious proſpect of eternal life, which we have ſet before us in Jeſus Chriſt. They know little of the divine conſtitution of grace, a conſtitution worthy of the eternal godhead to plan, worthy of the Bleſſed Son of God to execute, worthy of the bleſſed Spirit of Grace to apply to the hearts of men, and every way ſuited to the caſe and circumſtances of fallen man; the great deſign of which is, to open up and ſet before

mankind that eternal life, the grant of which is made in Jeſus Chriſt, in whom all the powers of life are lodged, and who ſtands at the head of the new creation, in the ſame manner as Adam ſtood at the head of the old. I ſay it again, they know little of this divine conſtitution, who can ſuppoſe that the great and leading view of it was kept entirely out of view for four thouſand years.

It is true, that all their promiſes were of a temporal nature; but it does not neceſſarily follow, that all their views and proſpects were only temporal, too, confined to the happineſs of a preſent life only.—Philoſophers may think they reaſon fairly, when they ſay, they reaſon from facts as they are laid before them; and as no foundation is laid in the whole of that diſpenſation for any thing to hope or fear, but temporal rewards and puniſhments; therefore, their views and proſpects could not reach beyond theſe: This reaſoning will not hold with thoſe who underſtand the connexion between the Old and New Teſtament; they ſtand in ſome ſuch relation to one another, as that of a fable and its moral;—and in the former, it is well known, a great deal more is underſtood than is expreſſed:—But we know well, the whole of that diſpenſation was typical and figurative;

rative; their ablutions, purifications, the whole of their temple ſervice, their promiſes and threatnings were all ſo. I ſay, their promiſes and threatnings as a nation were typical and figurative, as well as their temple worſhip and ſervice: This whole ſyſtem, taken combletely, may juſtly be conſidered as one great emplematical figure, repreſenting and ſhadowing forth that ſpiritual ſyſtem, which from the beginning has been carrying on under the conduct and direction of divine providence, of which it has ever been a peculiar object of care, and which will be finally accompliſhed, when the great plan of providence is finiſhed: In truth it was ſo, and was ſo framed by infinite wiſdom, to be a lively repreſentation of that great event, the advent of the Meſſiah; and, was it poſſible, to keep this divine character conſtantly in view, and not intimately to connect with it the view, the hope and proſpect of that eternal life, we have ſet before us in him? Was infinite wiſdom at ſo much pains to conſtitute and eſtabliſh a ſyſtem of divine worſhip and ſervice, with promiſes and threatnings annexed, all calculated to repreſent and ſhadow forth, in the moſt lively and forcible manner, that important truth upon which the whole conſtitution of grace is founded, That in the fulneſs of time the Son of God

ſhould

ſhould come into the world, and, by the all perfect ſacrifice of himſelf upon the croſs, became the author of eternal ſalvation to all who believe and obey him; and yet that devout worſhippers ſhould not ſee this?---It is altogether impoſſible. Ever ſince the firſt promiſe was given, the view of Jeſus Chriſt, and of eternal life as intimately connected with him, have been carried down in a progreſſive manner, through the whole of revelation, becoming clearer and clearer, till it came to its meridian glory and full luſtre, by the actual exhibition of Jeſus Chriſt in the fleſh

I mean not to ſay that every age had theſe views equally clear; on the contrary, it has been obſerved, that the knowledge of this great plan and of the important views it contains, was carried on, and opened up in a progreſſive manner: But it may with confidence be affirmed, that every age had ſuch a degree of clearneſs, as to their views of this great plan, as divine wiſdom ſaw beſt adapted to their ſituation and circumſtances.

We have a beautiful illuſtration of the gradual opening up of theſe views in Ezekiel's viſion of the holy waters, in the 47th chapter of his prophecy, from the beginning.

The

The waters are repreſented as iſſuing from under the threſhold of the door of the temple; and, upon the firſt meaſurement, when the prophet paſſed over, the waters reached to the ankles; upon a ſecond meaſurement, when he paſſed over, the waters were to the knees; in paſſing over a third time, the waters reached to the loins; laſt of all the waters became a river that could not be paſſed over: In the elegant language of the prophet, "the waters were riſen, waters to ſwim in, a "river that could not be paſſed over."

This beautiful deſcription requires no comment; it is an elegant lively repreſentation of the manner in which the great plan of revelation and the impotant views it opens up, have been carried on, ever ſince the firſt opening of it to man, under the conduct and direction of divine providence, till its full completion, in the perſonal appearance of *Jeſus Chriſt*.--- All that had been typified, prefigured and prophecied of, concerning them, then received their full accompliſhment. But when he came into the world, his appearance was ſo mean and unſightly, that thoſe who could judge from appearances only, could, as the prophet had foretold, ſee no form nor comelineſs in him wherefore he ſhould be deſired. He was long before deſcribed, in ancient prophecy, as a man of ſorrows and acquainted with

with grief, and was at laſt condemned and crucified as one of the baſeſt of malefactors; and, had it not been for the great, the intereſting event that followed, he would have been reckoned, as the learned Jews ſaid he was, a deceiver of the people. Upon the ſtricteſt enquiry that can be made, it will be found, that he lived with ſuch perfect innocence, that he could challenge his moſt inveterate enemies to convict him of ever having ſaid or done any thing amiſs, during the whole courſe of his life: And where is the character to be found among men, from the beginning of the world to this day, for which any man can, with propriety, ſay the ſame thing? They indeed charged him with many things which they called ſins and blaſphemies, but which were ſo far from being ſo, that they conſtitute the moſt amiable and brighteſt parts of his character. The ſum of the charge they brought againſt him was, that he, with a humanity and charity worthy of the Son of God, healed the ſick and diſeaſed on their ſabbath day: and that he ſaid, he was the Son of God, who ſhould come into the world. In ſaying which, he ſaid a great truth, and juſt what their Meſſiah, who at that time they were daily expecting, whenever he came, muſt have ſaid. They charged him as being a ſinner, for doing the moſt charitable

charitable and humane actions, and as being a blaſphemer, for ſaying one of the greateſt truths that ever was delivered to man, that he was the Son of God.

But though perfect innocence conſtitutes a very amiable part of a character, yet it cannot be ſupported and maintained, without the exerciſe of benevolence and beneficence through the whole courſe of life; without perfect love to God and man, with the natural, the neceſſary fruits and exerciſes of theſe upon every proper occaſion. This finiſhes a perfect character; and here Jeſus Chriſt ſhewed himſelf to the greateſt advantage, The early part of his life was paſſed in a very low and retired ſtation. We hear of nothing extraordinary, only his converſation with the Jewiſh doctors, and learned men in the temple, when he was only twelve years of age, which filled every one that heard him with aſtoniſhment. This obſcurity of his life, till his baptiſm, was enlightened by this public exhibition, which ſerved to rouze and awaken the minds of men: it was at a period of life when the underſtanding of youth begins to open, and when hopes begin to be formed of the figure which they are likely to make in the world. This paſſage in the life of Jeſus, is related only by one evangeliſt, viz. Luke, and without any parade or embelliſhment; but it has the effect of ſurpriſing

priſing us by its novelty; it ſtrikes us becauſe we do not expect it: Yet ſurpriſe is not the only feeling we experience: it charms, and in ſpite of ourſelves, attaches our hearts, and, for a moment unveils the diſtinguiſhed eminence of his public character. The evangeliſt only further relates, that after this he returned to his retirement at Nazareth, where he was ſubject to his parents, increaſing in wiſdom and ſtature, and in favour with God and man.

But when the time appointed for his public manifeſtation came, when he was to enter upon his proper buſineſs, as great Saviour of the world, which commenced at his baptiſm; we then find his whole life employed in acts of the greateſt humanity and beneficence, in going about doing good, healing all manner of diſeaſes, giving eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, limbs and feet to the mained and lame; and what was infinitely more, he gave life to the dead on ſeveral occaſions; None ever applied to him, however deſperate their caſe, who went away without a perfect cure. It is worth obſerving, that this miraculous power of healing all manner of bodily diſeaſes, ſtands as an index to that divine power which he come into the world chiefly to exerciſe, in healing the ſtill greater diſeaſes of the ſouls of men: There his chief, his principal

cipal buſineſs lay. He came down from heaven to earth on this gracious and merciful deſign; it was the great and important work that was given him of his heavenly Father to do:—in what manner that was attended to, and accompliſhed by him, the ſequel will unfold. He proclaimed the goſpel of the kingdom, thoſe good news to a periſhing world, which angels began at his birth, when they proclaimed glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good-will towards men. And this he did with ſuch power as was formerly unknown among men: Well might it be ſaid of him, that never man ſpake like this man. He ſpake with ſuch power, that not only ſtorms and tempeſts, all the operations of nature, were ſubject to him; but the devils themſelves were forced to give ready obedience to his word of command.

The number of miracles performed by him was very great; and the loweſt concluſion from thoſe aſtoniſhing inſtances of divine power, is that of Nicodemus, viz. That he muſt be a teacher ſent from God. To theſe miracles we find himſelf often appealing. Simple and natural as this concluſion made by Nicodemus may appear, yet it is very comprehenſive. Whatever he ſpoke in that capacity, viz. as a teacher ſent from God, had all the authority of a divine ora-

cle, and demanded ſubmiſſion to the words of the living God.

This carries his character very high: He ſaid he was the Chriſt, the Son of the living God, the King of Iſrael and Saviour of the world. Not ſuch a Saviour as they who had gone before him, and by whom God often wrought ſignal deliverance for his people; but the Author of eternal ſalvation to all who believe and obey him: Further, he repreſents himſelf as the judge of the world, by whoſe final ſentence the eternal ſtate of all mankind ſhall be determined. What a ſublime dignity appears in this view of his character! He carries his pretenſions ſtill higher. His words are remarkable: "No man "hath ſeen God at any time, the only begot-"ten Son who is in the boſom of the Father, "he hath declared him," and "I and my Father "are one: He that hath ſeen me, hath ſeen "the Father." This is repreſenting a perfect oneneſs with the only true God, his Father. Nay more, he ſays, "Whatever the Father does, "the ſame does the Son alſo, even to raiſing "the dead and quickening whom he will;" and his diſciples, who knew his mind perfectly, aſſure us, that he was ſo far from beginning to exiſt when he was born into this world, that he was not only before Abraham, as he himſelf ſaid,

ſaid, but even before the world; and that all things were made not only by him, but were made for him: In one word, that he was that divine perſon of whom Moſes and the prophets wrote; that very perſon whoſe divine character had been kept in view through the whole Old Teſtament diſpenſation. He, therefore, with great propriety, directed his hearers to ſearch the Scriptures, the old Teſtament, the only Scriptures then exiſting; for, ſays he, theſe are they which teſtify of me.

The author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews gives us the moſt exalted view of his character, and raiſes it to a ſtupendous height. Creating power is aſcribed to him; and that is the higheſt degree of power that can poſſibly be conceived; and accordingly we find it inſiſted on throughout the record, as the higheſt and moſt diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic, of true, proper, inconceivable Deity. We are taught, that the *eternal* word was made fleſh, and, by aſſuming the human nature into perſonal union with his divinity, made the neareſt approach the Creator could make to the creature;—in ſtrict truth, he united himſelf to it,---the moſt aſtoniſhing event that ever happened in God's world. This is in a ſtriking manner repreſented by the prophet Ezekiel, i. 10; deſcribing the cherubims, which were emblematical of the Trinity, he ſays, "as

" for the likeneſs of their faces, they four, (for " they are always repreſented as four), had the " face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the " right ſide: and they four had the face of an " ox on the left ſide: they four alſo had the " face of an eagle." It is not meant to enter any farther into this at preſent, than ſhortly to obſerve, that by the face of a man being joined to that of a lion on the right ſide, we have a lively and ſenſible repreſentation of the human nature being aſſumed, or taken into a perſonal union with the divine. This, thoſe who knew what they were doing in the Old Teſtament worſhip, looked for and expected.

Great pains have been taken, and ſtill are taken, to bring down this divine perſon, the eternal Son of God, to a mere creature: A very good man, they allow him to have been; a prophet raiſed up by God, as other prophets were, to teach and inſtruct an ignorant world. This they allow he did by his examplary life: The doctrines he taught, the precepts he laid down for regulating the conduct in life; all theſe they allow to be good, as well they may; for notwithſtanding the boaſted morality of the philoſophers, it may with confidence be affirmed, that there never was a complete ſyſtem of morality in the world, till the religion of Jeſus appeared

peared in it. After he had thus taught the world, which at that time was in the groſſeſt ignorance, like other martyrs, he died as a martyr, to confirm the truth of the doctrines he had taught :---He died and was buried, and there is an end of him, like that of other men when they die. We have nothing farther to look for, or expect from him. Poor, unhappy, ſelf-ſufficient and deluded men, who are at ſo much pains to deſtroy and overturn what God has graciouſly eſtabliſhed ! It is weak and wicked in men to diſpute with the Creator, with regard to what plans he ought to form for the happineſs of his creatures, and what meaſures of grace he ought to exerciſe towards them. Little do they ſeem to know that they are unhinging the whole conſtitution of grace, that gracious plan of eternal ſalvation that was laid by infinite wiſdom from eternal ages, and in time was manifeſted and made known to men. Men may talk of a remedial law, as it is called, an after thought of God, for mending and making the beſt that could be made of his ruined world ; but they talk at random, and betray extreme ignorance and folly. We have no foundation for ſuch a ſuppoſition in the whole record. This is the record which God hath given concerning his Son, that eternal life is in him, and that he who hath the

Son hath life. How comes eternal life to be lodged in a creature, and lodged there, too, in ſuch a manner as to have the power of communicating it to all who believe in him? Life of every kind is the ſole prerogative of God only. He is the ſole proprietor of life. How ſhall we reconcile this with the idea of life, eternal life, being lodged in a created being; for created he muſt be, if he is any thing leſs than the eternal God? And how ſhall this created being have the power of giving or communicating eternal life to whomſoever he pleaſes, to whoever believes in him?---This no man in his ſenſes can believe: it will be but a poor pitiful way of getting over this difficulty, to ſay, that God could make a creature that could create worlds, and therefore have life and all the powers of life in him. This is much more abſurd and unintelligible than the difficulty they would avoid; I mean the difficulty they find in ſaying, and believing, what is an eternal truth, that Jeſus Chriſt is the eternal Son of God.

If God is true, (and whoever doubted his being the God of eternal truth and veracity?) and if the revelation he has given to man is true, we have the ſame evidence from it, that Jeſus Chriſt is the eternal God, that we have of the being we call God being ſo. He is the Son of God

God only in his official capacity, in the part he acted in the œconomy of grace to man: We have the ſame evidences of divine power and wiſdom in him, with all other perfections, and the ſame means, too, of aſcertaining our belief, and helping our conceptions by the powers he exerted, in the mighty works which he did, many of which approach ſo near to creating power, that they at leaſt imply ſuch a command of all the powers of nature, as none but the Creator could poſſibly exert.

Doctor Prieſtly may, perhaps with ſome propriety, be placed at the head of the claſs I have had in my eye;—thoſe who reprobate the idea of Jeſus Chriſt being the eternal Son of God. His reputation as a philoſopher may perhaps have given him ſome reputation as a divine: As a philoſopher, he muſt be allowed to have merit, chiefly for his improvements in electricity:---as a divine, he has none. His remarks on Doctor Reid, Doctor Oſwald, and doctor Beattie, are a ſtanding proof to men of ſenſe, of his total ignorance of the ſubject on which he writes; and his ſtrenuous endeavours to overturn and deſtroy the only foundation on which the faith and hope of a Chriſtian can ſtand, are unworthy of an authoriſed teacher of the goſpel of Chriſt. Take away the doctrine of the divinity of the Son

Son of God, and what of Chriſtianity remains that is worthy of being retained? The whole plan of divine revelation, and the conſtitution of grace it opens up, fall to the ground, and nothing is left for the faith and hope of mankind to reſt upon, but the uncovenanted mercy of God, and the paultry ſhreds of moral rectitude.

Cruel, ungrateful men! Cruel to mankind, who would rob them of all theſe glorious hopes and proſpects, and the ſure foundation that is laid for them, by that diſpenſation of grace which is ſet before us in the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. Ungrateful to God, who diſpiſe, and hold in contempt the riches of that grace and mercy which he has in ſuch an aſtoniſhing manner manifeſted to mankind in his Bleſſed Son. But in ſpite of all the laboured efforts of the learned Doctor and his partizans, we know that the foundation of God, as he has laid it, ſtandeth ſure; and all their feeble efforts will never be able to overturne it.n The character we have been reviewing is ſo extraordinary, that it leads us to conſider and attend to a very aſtoniſhing event: How a being of ſuch diſtinguiſhed worth and excellence, ſhould have come into our world in ſuch low and mean circumſtances, in the form of a ſervant, and to be deſpiſed and rejected of men? There muſt be ſome very

extraordinary

extraordinary and proportionable end to anſwer by it; and where ſhall we find an end proportionate to this great event? To ſay it in one word, it was *Love* to mankind,---to give the moſt convincing evidence to the world, of the truth of what the Apoſtle John has told us, that God is *Love*. Here the diſtinguiſhing character of Jeſus Chriſt diſplays itſelf in the moſt extraordinary manner. He veiled for a time that glory he had with the Father from eternal ages, and came down from heaven to earth, veiling his glory under the mean appearance of his humanity, on the moſt gracious and merciful deſign, to lay a foundation for the happineſs, the eternal ſalvation of fallen degenerate man. This indeed, was *love*, ſuch as never was manifeſted to created beings of any kind.---The time was now come, when the full diſplay of the love of God to mankind, as it is graciouſly manifeſted to them in his Son Jeſus Chriſt, was to be made, and fully laid open; that mankind might have the cleareſt views of the whole of that great plan of divine grace towards men, that had been carrying on through a long ſucceſſion of ages, and was now clearly brought to light. In order to accompliſh and work out this gracious plan, he ſet before the world in his life, the moſt perfect pattern of all holineſs, virtue and goodneſs,

goodneſs, that ever was exhibited to human view. No wonder that he did ſo, for he ſet befor mankind the life of God in human form: He taught the moſt heavenly, pure, and perfect doctrines, that ever was taught in the world: Were we to compare the doctrines he taught, with thoſe of the moſt celebrated philoſophers, we would find the doctrines of Jeſus as much ſuperior to their's, as the truths of God are ſuperior to the dictates of the moſt exalted among men:---Were we to enquire into the influence which the doctrines of the philoſophers had upon the human heart, in purifyng and reforming the world, and compare this with the influence which the doctrines of the Bleſſed Jeſus had upon the hearts and lives of men, we would ſee the ſuperiority that ariſes from the truths of God, above thoſe of fallible men. It muſt indeed be allowed, in juſtice to the heathen philoſophers, that their writings contain many excellent truths, fine ſentiments and precepts, both of the moral and devout kind, which are worthy of the ſerious attention and peruſal of Chriſtians. But it is matter of juſt regret, that there was no proper method of propagating theſe pious and moral inſtructions among the people in heathen countries; and though there had been methods of doing this, which there really

really were not, they could have had but little influence upon their minds, engroſſed, darkened, and corrupted, as they were, with the loweſt and moſt abominable ſuperſtitions; and it may be juſtly doubted, if even the men of learning and education were able to protect themſelves from the corrupting influence of the low and immoral characters of the gods, whom they thought themſelves bound to worſhip.

It is eaſy to ſee from this, that the doctrines of the philoſophers had no influence upon the heart and life, in correcting and reforming the world; they had little or no influence on the learned themſelves, and upon the vulgar none at all. In oppoſition to this, it is evident, that the doctrines of revelation, as taught by the Bleſſed Jeſus, are of a purifying and ſanctifying nature:---their chief excellence lies in the happy influence they have upon the ſanctification and conſolation of our hearts:---the whole ſtrain of the ſcripture ſhows, that theſe are the great ends of all the diſcoveries of the goſpel of Chriſt. Jeſus himſelf ſuppoſes, that truth, the truths of the goſpel, are of a purifying nature, when he prays, "Sanctify them through thy "truth, thy word is truth:" And again, for their ſakes, "I ſanctify myſelf that they alſo "may be ſanctified through the truth." With regard

regard to the conſolation which the doctrines of the goſpel afford, the Apoſtle John, after ſpeaking of the truths of the goſpel, adds, "Theſe "things write we unto you, that your joy may be "full." And it were eaſy to ſhow, by an induction of particulars, that the great deſign of the goſpel is, to raiſe up thoſe who believe in it to the moſt perfect and complete joy.--- As to the morality of the goſpel, contained in the precepts of it, it is not neceſſary to explain and illuſtrate their purity and perfection, in order to ſhow their ſuperior excellence to any other ſyſtem of morals that may have been held in eſteem among mankind :--- They were a tranſcript of the life of the Bleſſed Jeſus; and that, as we have already ſeen, was the moſt pure and perfect that ever was known among men. It may not be improper to obſerve, what will be obvious to every one who attends to the natural operation of truth upon the heart, that it is not the precepts of the goſpel, but the truths of it, which are the direct and immediate means of purifying and comforting the heart.—It is not the precept, "Love the Lord your God with "all your heart;" but it is a full and clear view of the truth of the divine character, as excellent and perfect in the higheſt degree, which is the natural means of kindling the ſacred flame of love

love in our breaſts: At the ſame time it may be obſerved, that though the precepts of the goſpel are not the direct and immediate means of purifying and comforting the heart; yet they are real, though more remote means of them, and as eſſential parts of the goſpel as the doctrines themſelves. It is the laws of Chriſtianity which ſet before us that ſtandard of moral excellence and perfection, which we ought always to keep fully in our view, in order to our being raiſed up to a ſtill nearer conformity to him, who is the ſtandard both of perfection and of happineſs.

The view that has been taken of the hiſtory and character of Jeſus Chriſt, in its origin and progreſs through a long ſeries of ages, in his life, his doctrines and precepts, is important and intereſting in a high degree; on the knowledge and firm belief of it, with the influence theſe have upon the heart, the happineſs, the eternal happineſs of mankind depends. In this manner did our Bleſſed Saviour conduct and carry on the great buſineſs he came into the world to accompliſh; by his exemplary and perfect holy life; by the heavenly doctrines, the truths of God, which he taught; and by the pureſt ſyſtem of precepts for moral conduct in life that ever was laid before mankind. This leads to a very

intereſting event in the period of his hiſtory—his death, Aſtoniſhing event! the Son of God died! With this view he came into the world, that he might offer up that life he took upon him as a ſon of Adam,—an all perfect ſacrifice to the eternal godhead, for the ſins of men, to lay a foundation for their eternal happineſs through him. I have ſaid, that he might offer up his life a ſacrifice:—I am well ſupported in aying ſo, by his own words; "No man taketh "my life from me, I have power to lay down "my life; and I have power to take it up a-"gain:—this commandment have I received "of my Father."

Notwithſtanding the purity and innocence of his life, his humanity, benevolence, and unbounded goodneſs to men, the mighty works which he did in the many miracles which he performed: In a word, notwithſtanding the undoubted proofs, the unqueſtionable evidence he gave of his being the Son of God, who ſhould come into the world to be the Saviour of mankind, as had been prophecied concerning him, and notwithſtanding the exact accompliſhment of theſe prophecies in him; yet when the time was come, when the eternal purpoſes of God were to be accompliſhed in him, by the determinate counſel and foreknowledge of God, as

the

the writer of the *Acts* informs us, he was taken, and by wicked hands was crucified and ſlain. The moſt aſtoniſhingly grand event that ever happened in the whole creation of God. He was betrayed to his moſt inveterate enemies, and tried before different courts; and after ſuffering the greateſt indignities, was at laſt condemned to be crucified as one of the moſt worthleſs of mankind, and baſeſt of malefactors—To be crucified, did I ſay? Yes, the Bleſſed Son of God was crucified. He died upon a croſs as an all perfect ſacrifice for the ſins of men; the moſt perfect and complete ſacrifice that ever was offered on the theatre of human nature: If any thing can merit the attention of mankind, this ſurely ought, in an uncommon degree.

On the croſs of Chriſt hangs all the hopes of happineſs for man:—However ſtrange it may ſeem at firſt ſight, yet it will be found, that the moſt advantageous ſituation for taking a complete view of Jeſus, is at his croſs; and the juſteſt light in which we can poſſibly view him, is in that of a ſacrifice. There, upon the croſs, we behold him, as the great, the all perfect ſacrifice, ſo long typified and repreſented to the faith of many ages, ſo often foretold in ancient prophecy;—finiſhing, fully accompliſhing, all the eternal purpoſes of God;---the great plan

laid by infinite wiſdom, from eternal ages, for the eternal happineſs, the ſalvation of man, by his Bleſſed Son Jeſus Chriſt: There, upon the croſs, our Bleſſed Saviour could, as he did ſay, *it is finiſhed*; the whole eternal plan of the conſtitution of grace for the ſalvation of men is finiſhed! A grandeur of execution infinitely beyond all expreſſion, beyond all conception! For what tongue can expreſs, what heart can conceive, the aſtoniſhing diſplay of divine love, mercy and grace, that is there manifeſted to men? The more attentively we conſider that kind of death, and the circumſtances which attended his death, in particular, the more clearly will the tranſcendent beauty and excellence of his character ſhine forth to our view. From what has been already obſerved, the concluding ſcene of his ſufferings on the croſs is highly important and intereſting:---In all the annals of hiſtory, perhaps, there is not a ſubject, where the power of eloquence has a more ample field for exerting itſelf: Unhappily, eloquence is not the writer's talent. There are ſome circumſtances preceding, and at his death, which merit attention, as they diſcover a peculiar dignity, that ſtands altogether unequalled in the hiſtory of man. When the armed band went, in the ſilence and darkneſs of night, to apprehend him,

led

led by the faithleſs traitor, who well knew his places of reſort; the band of ſoldiers, with an armed multitude, and Judas at their head, came to the garden to apprehend him, juſt after his bloody agony, when his ſoul had been exceeding ſorrowful; in ordinary caſes, exceſſive ſorrow has a tendency to weaken and relax the mind: But amidſt all this ſcene of terror, the ſoul of Jeſus was firm, undiſmayed, and undaunted: He knew well on what account they were come; yet with a preſence and dignity of mind that aſtoniſhed them, he demanded of them, wherefore they were come?

The ſimple unadorned narration, which tells us that Jeſus, knowing all things that ſhould come upon him, went forth and ſaid unto his enemies, with intrepid boldneſs, Whom ſeek ye! is beautiful and ſtriking.---It ſtrikes with wonder and aſtoniſhment, to ſee one in ſuch circumſtances, by his firmneſs and reſolution, even overcome his enemies, and for a while, diſarm them of their fury; for it is added, They went backward and fell to the ground. Our wonder and ſurpriſe here, can only ceaſe, when we reflect that the perſon they were apprehending was the Son of God. In the whole of his trial, he ſhows a magnanimity and greatneſs of mind, a dignity of conduct and manner, that raiſes him ſupe-

rior even to his judges. His conduct before the High Prieſt is truly admirable: He aſked him many improper and unfair queſtions, on purpoſe to inveigle, and lead him to contradict himſelf; to which Jeſus anſwered nothing; in his ſilence he diſcovered a dignity ſuperior to eloquence itſelf. But when the High Prieſt adjured him by the living God, ſaying, "Tell "us, art thou the Chriſt, the Son of God?" He anſwers, with a dignity, a majeſty and grandeur that never was found in any criminal, at any bar; "Thou haſt ſaid; nevertheleſs I ſay unto "you, hereafter ſhall you ſee the Son of man "ſitting on the right hand of power, and com-"ing in the clouds of heaven." This is ſuch an anſwer as could only come from the Son of God; the ſcene is, in a manner, for a moment changed, and the humble Jeſus at the bar, is ſeated on his tribunal, and his haughty imperious judge, with all the crowd that were preſent, lying proſtrate before him. The dignity of his behaviour, when before Pilate, is remarkable, not only on the occaſions of his ſilence, but of the replies he made to the queſtions put to him. There are ſituations in life in which ſilence has a more ſignificant and expreſſive language, than is in the power of eloquence to expreſs. Such is the ſilence of a virtuous man ſuffering by the iniquity

iniquity of his country, on account of his virtues. It is eaſy to ſee how Jeſus muſt be affected by the accuſations of his enemies, and how great his provocation to break ſilence; but greater ſtill the dignity he diſplayed in commanding it. This uncommonly ſublime conduct of Jeſus, attracted the attention even of the judge himſelf: "Heareſt thou not," ſays he to Jeſus, "How many things they witneſs a-"gainſt thee? But he anſwered him never "a word, inſomuch that the governor marvel-"led greately." But when he was called upon by his judge, to give teſtimony to the truth, on this occaſion he was not ſilent. Pilate aſked him, "Art thou the king of the Jews? Jeſus "anſwered, My kingdom is not of this world. "Pilate aſks him again, Art thou a king, then? "He anſwered, Thou ſayeſt that I am a king: "To this end was I born, and for this cauſe "came I into the world, that I ſhould bear "witneſs unto the truth." This is the good confeſſion that the apoſtle refers to, when he ſays, ſpeaking of our Bleſſed Saviour, "Who, "before Pontius Pilate, witneſſed a good con-"feſſion,"—a confeſſion worthy of the Son of God. To this end was he born, and for this cauſe came he into the world, that he might be the truth itſelf, and bear witneſs to the truth,

as

as it is manifeſted to mankind, through and by him.

Did the bounds intended for this eſſay allow, it were eaſy to adduce many other inſtances of that ſublime dignity which Jeſus diſcovered, both preceding and during the courſe of his trial, and the ſufferings that followed upon it, even in the moſt humliating circumſtances.

This trial is the moſt important that ever came before a human bar: Jeſus, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, tried at the bar of an earthly judge, of Pilate the Roman governor in Judea.—And for what was he tried? For ſaying and doing the very things that the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, muſt ſay and do, if ancient prophecy is true, when he came into it. It would lead me beyond my intention, to conſider the ſtate of the world, and particularly the ſtate of the Jewiſh nation, at the time Jeſus of Nazareth appeared. I only ſhortly obſerve, that they were in a ſtate of the groſſeſt darkneſs and ignorance that any period can repreſent among thoſe who had the oracles of God.—At this period the Sun of righteouſneſs aroſe to enlighten, by divine truth, a dark, ignorant world:---Truth, which, if their minds had not been blinded, ſo as to be incapable of receiving truth, they muſt have felt and perceived.

But

But the great purpoſes for which he came into the world, were to be fully accompliſhed by his ſufferings and death.---In the language of prophecy, His ſoul was to be made an offering for ſin. The types and figures in the former diſpenſation, which pointed him out as a ſacrifice, were to be accompliſhed in him. The ancient prophecies concerning him were all to be fulfilled in him; the honour of the moral government of God in his creation, was to be ſupported. We are not to imagine, that the laws of the eternal God are like thoſe of the petty princes of this earth, which may be diſpenſed with at their pleaſure: The laws of heaven are eternal, immutable as God himſelf, and cannot be diſpenſed with. It was therefore neceſſary, that the honour and dignity of the divine law and government of God ſhould be ſupported and maintained: It was violated and broken by the firſt tranſgreſſion; and no created being could atone for the breaking of it:---But it was magnified and made honourable, fully vindicated and ſupported, by the perfectly holy life, and that all perfect ſacrifice, the death of the Son of God. Hence Jeſus himſelf ſays, when talking with the two diſciples after his reſurrection, "O fools, and ſlow "of heart to believe all that the prophets have "ſpoken; ought not Chriſt to have ſuffered "theſe

" theſe things, and to enter into his glory?" and the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews ſays, " It became him, for whom are all things, " and by whom are all things, in bringing ma- " ny ſons into glory, to make the captain of " their ſalvation perfect through ſufferings:" And, being thus made perfect through ſufferings, the ſame inſpired writer tells us, he is become the author of eternal ſalvation to all who believe and obey him.

In a word, The whole plan of redemption, as laid by infinite wiſdom, in that conſtitution of grace which is graciouſly eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt, for the happineſs, the eternal ſalvation of men, and which had been carrying on for upwards of four thouſand years, was now to receive its final accompliſhment: It was now to be finiſhed by the ſufferings and death of the Son of God---by that ſacrifice which he was to offer up of himſelf upon the croſs to the eternal Godhead.---By that ſacrifice, he finiſhed the plan of divine providence and grace towards men, which infinitely tranſcends the comprehenſion of the moſt exalted of created beings.

There is a circumſtance that ſhould have been noticed before, as it preceded the trial of Jeſus. It has been juſt ſlightly mentioned, but merits a more particular attention, as it diſcovers an aſtoniſhing

aſtoniſhing degree of fortitude of mind and greatneſs of ſoul, under ſuch extreme diſtreſs, as no created being could ever be capable of ſuffering. I mean his agony in the garden of Gethſemane. What heart can conceive—What language is capable of expreſſing the extreme anguiſh of ſoul he then felt, when, as the evangeliſt emphaticaly expreſſes it, his ſweet was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground? The agony of his ſoul muſt have been great and ſevere, infinitely beyond the conception of mortals, that had ſuch an aſtoniſhing effect on his ſacred body, and made him cry out, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; yet, with that reſignation that became the great Saviour of the world, he adds, Not my will, but thine be done: An example worthy of the imitation of all who believe in him. In this, as in every part of our duty, he hath ſet us an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps. As a farther evidence that his agony and ſufferings were inconceivably great, a divine interpoſition was neceſſary; for we are told, there appeared an angel from heaven ſtrengthening him. This extreme agony would not appear ſurpriſing, were we capable to conceive the infinite load of guilt which he then ſuſtained, and which none but the Son of God could bear. The guilt of the whole

whole human race was more than ſufficient to have cruſhed the whole creation of God.---In the grand plan of divine grace to men, it was reſerved for the Son of God to ſuſtain the ſtupendous load. The time was now at hand, when the grandeſt event that ever happened in God's world was to take place,---the death of the Son of God, in order to finiſh, fully accompliſh, and lay a foundation for all the purpoſes of that diſpenſation of grace that is made to man through him.

No wonder that the near proſpect of this ſhould affect his innocent ſoul in the manner we find it did. It has been obſerved, that this ſevere agony diſcovered an aſtoniſhing fortitude of mind and greatneſs of ſoul; to which may be added, the moſt tender ſympathy with the weakneſs of human nature. Jeſus well knew the extreme ſeverity of the ſufferings now immediately before him; yet, with what calm, unruffled dignity and fortitude, does he meet them? With what uncommon greatneſs of ſoul does he undergo the moſt acute agonizing pain?---Well might it be ſaid here, as was ſaid of him on another occaſion,---Truly this was the Son of God. For his ſufferings were ſuch as none but he who was God, was capable of ſuffering. The mild and gentle manner in which he rebukes the conduct

duct of the three diſciples he took with him to be witneſſes of this diſtreſſing ſcene, is truly amiable.---Having given them a charge to watch till he went to ſome diſtance to pray, upon his return he found them aſleep, and only ſays, "Could ye not watch with me one hour? "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temp-"tation." But he adds, "The ſpirit indeed is "willing, but the fleſh is weak." He retired again, as before, to pray, and upon his return to them he found them again aſleep:---their hearts were filled with ſorrow, and their eyes were heavy: He only ſays, in compaſſion to their weakneſs, "Sleep on now, and take your reſt, "the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of "ſinners." He well knew the weakneſs of the human frame; for, in the language of inſpiration, he himſelf took part of the ſame; and, as the inſpired writer expreſſes it, we have not an high prieſt that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

The tender and ſympathetic feelings of Jeſus, for the weakneſs, the infirmities of the diſciples upon this occaſion, will appear in a very ſtriking light, if we conſider the depth of his diſtreſs.---When we ſee him pouring out his griefs, applying to his diſciples, beſpeaking as it were their friendſhip and aid:---When we ſee him applying to heaven itſelf for relief;

we are lead to conceive of ſuch diſtreſs as none but the greateſt minds are capable of ſuffering; ſuch, in the preſent caſe, as none but the Son of God was capable of ſuffering. He had led out the three choſen diſciples, who had lately been witneſſes of a very different ſcene, his tranſfiguration, to be witneſſes of his agony, that he might familiarize their minds to ſorrow, and better prepare them for witneſſing his ignominious death. In all this ſcence of ſevere ſuffering, we find his tenderſt, moſt feeling, and compaſſionate regards, directed more to his diſciples than to himſelf.---Here we have before us a truly noble, dignified and compaſſionate object; Jeſus in the deepeſt diſtreſs, yet all attention to the welfare, the honour and happineſs of his friends. There is another remarkable inſtance of his poſſeſſing, in an uncommon degree, theſe tender and compaſſionate regards for men, thoſe fine feelings of the heart which conſtitute a peculiar excellence in human nature.

It is on that moving and moſt affecting occaſion, when he was led forth, after he was condemned to be crucified, bearing his croſs to Calvary, the place of execution, multitudes followed him, as is common on ſuch occaſions, among whom we are told were many women, many of whom had probably often heard his divine diſcourſes, they wept

wept and bewailed him. It was natural on ſeeing ſuch a moving ſpectacle. It has a ſtrong tendency to rouze and awaken the tender ſympathetic feelings of the heart, even though we are convinced that the object of it ſuffers juſtly, as one of an infamous character: how much more muſt it have had this tendency upon them, many of whom it was impoſſible but they muſt have heard of the excellence of his character, his diſtinguiſhed goodneſs, benevolence and beneficence to men. It is painful to behold one, even of the moſt worthleſs character, in ſuch diſtreſſing circumſtances. The tender and humane feelings of the heart, obliterate for a while, the regards due to law and juſtice. But it is painful to an extreme beyond all conception, to ſee a virtuous, one of a diſtinguiſhed virtuous character, who has been a public bleſſing to mankind, ſuffering ſuch ignominy and ſevere diſtreſs.---In that caſe, we not only feel for the ſufferer, but for the violence done to the laws of our country:---It raiſes in our breaſts all the warm and ſympathetic feelings which the human heart is capable of. Such, we may eaſily conceive, were the feelings of many of the multitude who followed Jeſus from the place of judgment to the place of crucifixion without the city. When he ſaw them thus deeply affected with his ſcene

of ſuffering,—regardleſs of himſelf, regardleſs of the extreme pain and agony now immediately before him;---with the moſt tender and compoſſionate feelings of heart, he looks around him, and with a warmth of affection, expreſſive of the inmoſt ſentiments of his ſoul; expreſſive of thoſe tender and affectionate regards of the deep concern he had for their happineſss and that of human kind; he ſays, "Daughters of Je-"ruſalem, weep not for me; but weep for "yourſelves and for your children." A more moving and affectionate addreſs was never made to mortals. Weep not for me; for, notwithſtanding the ignominy and diſgrace in which you now behold me, I am going to work out and and accompliſh the important work I came into the world to accompliſh, and was given me of my heavenly Father to do, the eternal ſalvation of the human race; of as many as ſhall believe in me, by the ſacrifice I am now going to offer up of myſelf upon this croſs, which I now bear: therefore, weep not for me, but weep for yourſelves and for your children,---for ſuch as do not believe in me, as the Son of God and Saviour of makind.

Let us now follow him to the croſs:---There, as has been already obſerved, is the moſt advantageous

tageous ſituation for having the moſt complete view of him.---There, in Jeſus nailed to the croſs, we have before us the moſt dignified object that ever the world beheld;---Jeſus, the bleſſed Son of God, in human form, nailed to, bleeding, dying upon a croſs! There muſt be ſome great and important, ſome proportionable end to be anſwered, by ſuch an aſtoniſhingly great event; the grandeſt event that ever happened in the whole creation of God. Here the diſtinguiſhing character of Jeſus Chriſt appears in its brighteſt and moſt lively colours. And what was the great end, may it be aſked, to be anſwered by this great event? It was to finiſh and fully accompliſh the great, the important purpoſes of divine grace, mercy and love to men;---it was to finiſh the whole great plan of the conſtitution of grace, and evidence the truth of what the Apoſtle John tells us, That God is love. To convince mankind of this truth; to reconcile them to God, as the proper object of love; to raiſe their hearts to the love of God in Chriſt Jeſus,---to the love of all goodneſs, is the great deſign of the goſpel, that record which God has made concerning his Son.

But how is this to be affected? The hearts of all men are naturally alienated from God. To obviate the difficulties that would ariſe in ſol-

ving this, would lead me much beyond my intention. Whence the hearts of men are naturally alienated from God?---how, and by what means, the hearts of men are raiſed up, under the influence of the Spirit of grace, into a fitneſs and meetneſs for reliſhing and enjoying all that happineſs that is to be found only in God?---are queries that would require much diſcuſſion. I only intend ſome obſervations on an important ſaying of the great Saviour.---He has made it of importance by his manner of expreſſing it; and there is ſome reaſon to complain, that it has not generally met with all the attention that the importance of it requires: If any man, ſays our Lord, will be my diſciple, let him deny himſelf, take up his croſs and follow me. I have ſaid, his manner of expreſſing it makes it of importance:---If any man will be my diſciple, or no man can be my diſciple, but on theſe terms, that he deny himſelf, take up his croſs and follow me.---To deny himſelf,---What is that? Self-denial is a very important chriſtian duty; it is made ſo by our bleſſed Lord himſelf.---But what is it? What is denying ourſelves? We may be told it is a humble and ſelf-denied diſpoſition of mind, a being denied to all vicious inclinations and diſpoſitions of heart, denied, even to our religious ſentiments and diſpoſitions of heart,---to place nothing

nothing to their account by way of merit,---to be denied to the good things of life, when called upon in the providence of God to do ſo. All this is very good ſo far as it goes, but this is not denying ourſelves, and it is *ourſelves* we are expreſsly called upon to deny.---What then is it to deny ourſelves? It has a much more ſignificant meaning than, I am afraid, is commonly attended to, even by Chriſtians themſelves. That I may expreſs myſelf with clearneſs and preciſion, on this important ſubject, it is neceſſary to obſerve, that two different grants of life was made to man; the firſt grant of life was made to the firſt man, our firſt father, in our firſt creation ſtate: there he ſtood as the repreſentative of all mankind; and that life and happineſs that was given to him was to be continued to him and all his poſterity, upon his fulfilling the terms on which that grant of life was made to him. He forfeited that life by not fulfilling the terms: It was for ever loſt to him and all his deſcendants. But all mankind came into the world as children of Adam, by that grant of life that was made to our firſt father, in our firſt creation ſtate: That life, I have already obſerved, was forfeited and loſt; and none of mankind can live, or have any pretenſions to living, by that original grant of life:—But there was a new

grant

grant of life made to man in the new creation ſtate. The original ſtate of mankind, I call the old or firſt creation ſtate: That ſtate we are brought into by the conſtitution of grace, as it is eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt, I call the new creation ſtate.---Before I go farther, let me ſhortly obſerve, that the original ſtate of man, as we have ſeen by the event, was not intended to be the permanent ſtate of mankind: A much higher ſtate of happineſs, than man was capable of being raiſed up to in his firſt creation ſtate, and quite a different, but more exalted way of living, was laid for man, in the councils of infinite wiſdom from eternity; by which man is dignified in a manner, that, ſo far as we know, no other created order of beings are, and the divine perfections and excellencies of God, are raiſed to a degree of excellence, that, ſo far as we know, is no where elſe to be found in the creation of God. This new grant of life is made to Jeſus Chriſt, who is the great head of the new creation of God: In him it is lodged, and, with all the powers of it, ſafe and ſecure, beyond the poſſibility of a forfeiture; for he has perfectly fulfilled the terms on which the grant was made; and through him it is given, and comes free to all who believe in him. Let me now aſk again, What are we to underſtand by denying

denying ourſelves? What can we underſtand by it leſs than that we deny that life we bring into the world as children of Adam, which we have by the original grant of life made to him?--- This, in ſtrict propriety of language, is denying ourſelves: It is denying that life, and all pretenſions to living by that forfeited grant of life. What follows? what ſhould follow, upon thus denying what is properly ourſelves, but that, by faith, we betake ourſelves to that new grant of life that is made in Jeſus Chriſt, that, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, the life we now live in the fleſh, may be by the faith of the Son of God. It is the ſame with what the ſame apoſtle elſewhere ſays, "Put off the old man with his "deeds, and put on the new man, which, after "God, is created in knowledge, righteouſneſs, "and true holineſs."

The apoſtle's manner of expreſſing this important truth, has been endeavoured to be ſoftened, by ſaying, that putting off the old man, is laying aſide all evil habits and diſpoſitions of heart; and putting on the new man, is to acquire the habits and practice of virtue and goodneſs. But how is all this done? How do we lay aſide evil habits and diſpoſitions? How do we acquire habits of virtue and goodneſs? preciſely in the way that our Bleſſed Saviour has told

told us, by denying ourſelves, taking up our croſs and following him. And this leads me to the ſecond part of his important ſaying, in his terms of diſcipleſhip: "If any man will be my "diſcipal, let him take up his croſs."---What are we to underſtand by taking up our croſs? We may be told, it is to have a humble reſigned ſtate of mind to the will of providence, even under the ſevereſt trials and diſtreſſes of life; to bear them with Chriſtian fortitude and patience; looking up to him, who is the God of ſalvation, for ſupport and comfort under them, and which he alone can give.---All this is very good, but it is not taking up our croſs. If I underſtand it at all, it has a ſtill more ſignificant and extenſive meaning. What was the croſs to the great Saviour of mankind? It was the inſtrument of death.---On the croſs he died; the the croſs muſt be the inſtrument of death to every ſincere diſciple and follower of his: the death of that life we bring into the world as children of Adam, and which, I have obſerved, we are expreſsly called upon to deny;---That life muſt be crucified and put to death, before we can enter upon that new life which we have through Jeſus Chriſt. The apoſtle's words have a much ſtronger and more ſignificant meaning than perhaps is commonly attended to: "I

"am

"am crucified with Chriſt; nevertheleſs I live, "yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and the "life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the "faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and "gave himſelf for me." The apoſtle does not ſay this for himſelf only, as an apoſtle: He ſays no more than what muſt be the language of every Chriſtian: I am crucified with Chirſt. The expreſſion is remarkably nervous and ſtrong. What is it to be crucified with Chriſt? It is to do with that life we bring into the world, and which we hold by the firſt grant of life, as he did with his life---to crucify it. He took up that life he lived on earth as a man, with no other view than to lay it down, after he had anſwered the other purpoſes of it on earth, to offer it up a ſacrifice to the juſtice of God, to make a complete atonement for the ſins of men; and he calls upon every diſciple of his to follow him.---This is the third particular he lays down in his terms of diſcipleſhip;---If any man will be my diſciple, after denying himſelf and taking up his croſs, let him follow me. What it is to follow Chriſt, has been the ſubject of many diſcourſes; inſtead of deſcending to particulars, I only obſerve in general, that to follow Chriſt, is to have our hearts and lives formed upon his divine life and character. But

there

there is one particular in which we are called to follow Chriſt, which is of too much conſequence to be overlooked, as it is not ſo generally attended to, as its importance requires;—it is to follow him, not only through the ſcene of his ſufferings to his croſs, but on his croſs,—to be crucified with him,—to ſacrifice that life we have as children of Adam to the juſtice of God, as he did his life:—The ſacrifice he offered up of his life on the croſs, beſides all the other important purpoſes it was to anſwer, was the moſt perfect pattern and example to all his followers; and in which they are expreſly called upon to follow him. Hence the apoſtle calls us to crucify the fleſh, what he elſewhere calls the old man, with its affections and luſts, and to be renewed in the ſpirit of our minds.

This is ſtrictly and properly without a metaphor, a new creation, by which men are introduced into a new world, and a new way of living; and there they are provided in a new head, ſuch as Adam was to man in his firſt creation ſtate. To him the new grant of life—life eternal was made; and by his uniting the man Jeſus with the eternal word, all the fulneſs of life is lodged in his hand; and ſo lodged there, that none can receive it, or have any ſhare in it, but by deriving it from him, by partaking of his ſpirit,

ſpirit, that ſpirit of life that dwells in him without meaſure. This is what is properly called regeneration, being born again. Under the gracious influence of his ſpirit and grace, which he hath purchaſed for all who believe in him, we are raiſed up to a likeneſs, a bleſſed conformity to him; ſuch a likeneſs, as, in our preſent ſtate we are capable of, in order to our being made perfectly like him, by ſeeing him as he is, when he appears in his glory.

Thus, the character of Jeſus Chriſt opens up to, and ſets before us, all the different and ſeemingly inconſiſtent accounts that have been given of him:—God condeſcended to dwell with men upon earth, in the man Jeſus; and the man exalted, raiſed up to all the perfection, the glory and dignity of God, with all the fulneſs of life, and its moſt perfect powers dwelling in him; perfect wiſdom, almighty power, and the perfection of goodneſs, all exerted in and by this wonderful perſonage, the man Chriſt Jeſus; who, in the œconomy of grace, is appointed to anſwer theſe high purpoſes, to be the true high prieſt interceſſor, ſtanding between the Creator and his creatures, and the great, the only mean of communication between God and man.

From the whole of his hiſtory laid together, there ariſes the moſt amiable and perfect of all

characters; a perfect image of the invisible God: His perfect disinterested love to men was tried and approved, by all the tests by which love can possibly be tried. These I have already had occasion to take particular notice of: They come recommended to us by every circumstance which can be imagined to endear the tenderest and most affectionate love;—love without a precedent; love without a parallel; a love that will stand single and by itself, through all the ages of eternity: And all the reward he had to ask of his heavenly Father, for all the severe sorrows and sufferings he had undergone throughout his faithful service, was, as we have it in his own words, in his valedictory prayer: "I have "glorified thee on the earth: I have finished "the work which thou gavest me to do: And "now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine "own self, with the glory which I had with "thee before the world was."

That glory he began to enter upon at his resurrection from the dead; by which he manifested himself to be what no other man ever was, the absolute proprietor of his own life, who, as he himself has said, had power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again; and as he was the first fruits of the resurrection, for he was the first who arose from the dead to die no more;

more; ſo, in his official capacity, as the great Mediator, he was the firſt believer: This is not ſo commonly attended to: But he was the firſt who believed the whole plan that was laid by infinite wiſdom and grace from eternal ages, for the ſalvation of man, and which he himſelf wrought out and accompliſhed. I have ſaid we are to follow him in his ſufferings, even to be crucified with him. I now ſay, we are to follow, to imitate him in his faith, which in him was ſtrong and ſincere. I know it has been ſaid that there is an impropriety in ſaying that Jeſus Chriſt was the firſt Believer: For why, ſay they, ſhould one be ſaid to believe in the doctrines which he himſelf teaches? I can ſee no impropriety in it. Who would teach doctrines he does not believe? I would not be underſtood to mean that Jeſus Chriſt believed in the ſame manner that we are required to believe in him: my views, in ſpeaking of Jeſus Chriſt as being the firſt believer, riſe much higher; and I hope I may be allowed to inſiſt that he was the firſt believer in the full accompliſhment of the great plan of the diſpenſation of grace to men through him; and which he himſelf was to work out and accompliſh, and in the bleſſed fruits and effects of it upon the hearts and lives, the happineſs of man And when our

faith in him is ſincere, it will lead us to a firm belief of the full accompliſhment of that diſpenſation of grace to men through him, that has been mentioned; and the influence it muſt have on the human heart, in raiſing it up to a fitneſs and meetneſs for the everlaſting enjoyment of that happineſs he is gone to prepare for all his ſincere followers in his Heavenly Father's houſe.

By his ſufferings, his death and reſurrection, he has ſet life and immortality in the faireſt and cleareſt light; and has laid a foundation of faith and hope for all his followers, firm and ſtrong, of their being raiſed up to a likeneſs to him in his reſurrection and glory. And what ought we to think of being raiſed up to a likeneſs unto,—of being made partakers with, the bleſſed Son of God, in happineſs and glory?

He continued a conſiderable time on earth, after his reſurrection, as long as he judged it neceſſary to confirm his diſciples in the faith, the full aſſurance of his reſurrection; and to give them ſuch inſtructions as he judged neceſſary for carrying on and eſtabliſhing his kingdom and religion in the world,—that kingdom of righteouſneſs, of grace and truth, which he came

came into the world to eſtabliſh among men. He then led out his diſciples to Bethany, a ſmall diſtance from Jeruſalem, where he bleſſed them, and aſcended up into heaven in their view: There he entered into his glory:—There he is gone in a public capacity as the great Mediator, to take poſſeſſion, not for himſelf only, but in name and behalf of all his followers, of theſe manſions of glory he has prepared for them in his Father's houſe; from whence, he has aſſured us, he will come again to receive them unto himſelf, that where he is, there they may be alſo.

Soon after his aſcenſion, he gave his diſciples a full, a convincing proof of his having entered into his glory, by ſuch an exertion of power as none but God could give; in fulfilling the promiſe he had made to them before his death, that he would ſend them another comforter, who ſhould lead them into all truth; that Spirit of grace and truth which he had purchaſed for them and for all his followers. And this promiſe he fulfilled, in a manner that any one would think would have reached conviction to the moſt obſtinately prejudiced unbeliever.

Thus we have him preſented to our faith, in a ſtate of dignity and of glory infinitely above the higheſt, the moſt exalted deſcription the prophets had given of him,—in a ſtate of glory and

dignity, infinitely above the moſt exalted views and conceptions of angels themſelves, and much more above thoſe of any of the ſons of men.

The whole of his character is intereſting to mankind in the higheſt degree. But there is one part of it which it concerns us much to keep conſtantly in view: It is this: That as all power in heaven and in earth is given into his hand, and the whole weight of government, through the widely extended creation of God, laid upon him; ſo all judgment is committed to him; particularly the final judgment, at that day which God hath appointed to judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained for that purpoſe; of which he hath given the fulleſt aſſurance to all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead:—that day when we muſt all appear before his judgment-ſeat, and have our eternal ſtate of happineſs or miſery fixed, and finally determined, by his unalterable decree.

Such is the character of Jeſus Chriſt:—A character ſo dignified, in every view ſo extraordinary, ſo much above human nature, that the friends of religion may, with confidence, call upon the whole tribe of deiſtical writers, to account for ſuch a perfect character being ever heard of, or known among men, if it had not really exiſted.

How

How came the idea of ſuch a finiſhed character ever to be formed by man? Who was to frame it, and work it up to the perfect conſiſtency we find in every part of it? Shall we have recourſe to, and expect it from the philoſophers, men of learning and genius? It is infinitely above the moſt exalted views they were capable to take of human nature. I appeal to their writings in ſupport of this aſſertion: And can it be ſuppoſed that the poor illiterate fiſhermen of Galilee, men of no education, and who were not diſtinguiſhed by uncommon natural abilities, were capable of forming the idea of ſuch a character, unleſs they had ſeen it? How then came it to be known in the world? By being exhibited in the life and character of JESUS CHRIST.

I HOPE it will not be thought improper to introduce, at the end of this eſſay, a letter which was ſent the author by a friend, deſcriptive of the perſon and manner of our Saviour; it was taken from a manuſcript in the poſſeſſion of the preſent family of Kelly, now in Lord Kelly's Library, which was taken from the original letter of Publius Lentulus, at Rome.

It being the uſual cuſtom of Roman governors, to advertiſe the ſenate and people of ſuch material things as happened in their provinces, in the days of the Emperor Tiberius Cæſar, Publius Lentulus, Preſident of Judea, wrote the following epiſtle to the Senate concerning our Saviour.

" THERE appeared in theſe our days, a man " of great virtue, named Jeſus Chriſt, who is " yet living amongſt us, and of the Gentiles is " accepted for a prophet of truth, but his own " diſciples call him the Son of God. He rai- " ſeth the dead, and cureth all manner of diſ- " eaſes :—A man, of ſtature ſomewhat tall and " comely, with a very reverend countenance, " ſuch as the beholders may both love and fear : " His hair of the colour of a cheſnut full ripe, " plain to his ears, whence, downwards, it is " more orient, curling and waving about his " ſhoulders : In the midſt of his head is a ſeam " or partition of his hair, after the manner of " the Nazarites : His forehead plain and very " delicate : His face without ſpot or wrinkle, " beautified with a lovely red : His noſe and " mouth ſo formed, as nothing can be repre- " hended : His beard thickiſh, in colour like " his hair, not very long, but forked ; His look

" innocent

" innocent and mature: His eyes grey, clear
" and quick: In reproving he is terrible: In
" admoniſhing courteous and fair ſpoken—plea-
" ſant in converſation, mixed with gravity: It
" cannot be remembered that any have ſeen
" him laugh, but many have ſeen him weep:
" In proportion of body moſt excellent; his
" hands and arms moſt delectable to behold:
" In ſpeaking very temperate, modeſt and wiſe.
"—A man, for his ſingular beauty, ſurpaſſing
" the children of men."

ESSAYS, &c.

ESSAY VI.

On the Character of God.

THE Character of God is ſo much above the comprehenſion of man, that we can form no proper conception of it. What can we know of the inviſible God? What can we know of Him, but from the works and ways by which he has manifeſted himſelf to his creature man; ſuch works and ways of his as fall under our obſervation. The inviſible God can by no poſſible means be perceived, or known by man till he thus manifeſts himſelf; and, only ſo far as he is pleaſed to do ſo,—ſo far as we are ſure that ſuch works are really his,---we may be led to know as much of his real character as is diſcovered in them; in the ſame manner as we learn, and form our opinions of the characters of men by their works and ways. But it muſt be acknowledged,

acknowledged, that, to form proper and juſt views of the divine character, is the chief, the greateſt difficulty we meet with in matters of religion, and which lays a foundation for all the reſt.

It is not an eaſy matter to acquire ſuch views of the divine character as is neceſſary for us to have, in order to our having juſt views of him as the great Creator of heaven and earth, and the God of love, grace and mercy to men. Thoſe who think but ſlightly of this matter, imagine it very eaſy: They are told that God created the world:—that he created man in a perfectly happy ſtate:—that man fell from that happy ſtate by diſobeying the command of his Creator:—that God was graciouſly pleaſed to provide a Saviour to deliver man from the puniſhment due to this tranſgreſſion; and that all who believe in this Saviour ſhall be eternally happy.—All this is very good: Theſe are the great outlines, the leading principles of religion: But how come we by the knowledge of theſe truths?--How came we by the knowledge of the inviſible God, as the Creator of heaven and earth? Did we know the extent of that power that is neceſſary to create; that is, without matter to work upon, or inſtruments to work by, to raiſe this ſtupendous frame of nature out of nothing into exiſtence,

exiſtence, then we would have the higheſt demonſtration of Almighty power that it is poſſible for man to receive: but this is altogether impoſſible for man, and muſt appear ſo to every created mind. In this light it appeared to the wiſeſt of the ancient philoſophers, and muſt have done ſo to all their ſucceſſors among mankind, had not their minds been opened and enlightened by the facts we have recorded in the moſt authentic and beſt vouched hiſtory that ever was written. But when we come by the knowledge of a Creator, to know there is a God, a difficulty ſtill remains: How do we form juſt and proper ideas and conceptions of his divine character? What can we know of the omnipotent One? Little, very little, even the higheſt attainments in human knowledge is capable of knowing of the inviſible God: We may, it is true, form ſome idea of his character, in the ſame manner as we come to the knowledge of the characters of men, as has been already obſerved; that is, by the reports we hear of them.

But theſe have little effect, unleſs they are verified to us by facts, that is, by ſuch works and ways as uniformly inſtruct the character. Thus we may form proper conceptions of what are called divine attributes, perfections and powers, wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, &c. We

may even form ſome idea of the immenſity of his being, and omnipreſence : but after all the diſcoveries we are capable of making in this way, theſe are but modes of being; and though they make a general character, yet unleſs we have a determinate ſubſtance, or perſon to connect them with, we are ſtill at a loſs where to apply thoſe attributes, perfections, and powers : We are at a loſs where or how to apply this general character—This has been the foundation of all theſe miſapprehenſions of the Deity, of theſe miſtaken notions and views of God that have taken place among men---while men were driven, for want of juſt views of God, either to fancy him like themſelves, or to run into confuſion inextricable, not knowing where to find him; and there worſhipping as the Athenians did, an unknown God. This was, in a great meaſure, remedied to the ancient patriarchs, by perſonal appearances, which have by many been underſtood to be the ſon of God appearing in human form, long before his appearance in the fleſh---But theſe appearances had this peculiar diſadvantage, that they gave a handle, either to conceive of him as a man, however diſtinguiſhed by extraordinary powers, or at leaſt made it hard to diſtinguiſh him from an ordinary Angel. Hence aroſe a difficulty of no

ſmall

ſmall importance, the difficulty of diſtinguiſhing the Creator from the creature.

This was in a great meaſure remedied to the Iſraelites of old, by the tabernacle and temple ſervice; and the furniture which they contained, neceſſary, made ſo by divine appointment, for performing that ſervice, that of the Holy of Holies, merits a particular attention; I mean the mercy ſeat, emblematical of the throne of grace, and the cherubims at each end of it, which was well underſtood by the devout worſhippers, to be emblematical of the perſons in the divine eſſence; add to this the glory which appeared there, overſhadowing the mercy-ſeat, by which God was effectually diſtinguiſhed from every creature; and they knew with the utmoſt certainty, where to find and apply to him on every occaſion.

But theſe were ſtill no more than only ſhadows of heavenly things, as the inſpired writer calls them: And all difficulties are removed in Jeſus Chriſt alone.

Though we can form no proper conceptions of that God whom no eye hath ſeen or can ſee, yet we can eaſily conceive of his uniting himſelf to man, by aſſuming our nature, and taking it into a perſonal union with the divine, as he has done in him who is the image of the in-

viſible God: So that wherever Jeſus is, there we may be ſure to find God; and thus Chriſt is both the temple and prieſt interceſſor, by whom, and by whoſe miniſtry, we may at all times approach God, in as clear and diſtinct a manner as if we ſaw him with our eyes, or he were perſonally preſent. For he that hath ſeen the Son hath ſeen the Father; and no man can come unto God, or ſo much as know him to any purpoſe but by him.

It has been obſerved, that God is the great Creator, the ſovereign proprietor of heaven and earth, of all the works which he hath made, and which he created by his ſon Jeſus Chriſt; for by him, as the writer to the Hebrews informs us, he made the worlds. All things were created by him and for him, and without him was not any thing made. That all things were created by him, we have all the evidence that the authority of God can give; but it requires ſome attention to know why the worlds were created *for* him. Why were they created for him? That millions of beings might be raiſed up, under the gracious, the divine influence of his ſpirit and grace, to a fitneſs and meetneſs for the everlaſting enjoyment of himſelf, in theſe manſions of perfect peace and everlaſting joy that he is gone to prepare in his heaven-

ly

ly Father's houſe, for all who ſincerely believe in, love, and obey him—Thus, as the evangelical prophet expreſſes it, he ſhall ſee of the travel of his ſoul, and ſhall be ſatisfied. I therefore conclude, in the apoſtle's words, that the worlds were created *for* him, as well as *by* him. Some may pretend that the creation of a finite world is not a proper evidence of infinite power. To take it at the very loweſt, it affords a ſtrong preſumption that nothing is impoſſible with God; and let it be further obſerved, that, as there is nothing in being but what he brought into exiſtence, ſo there can be nothing to limit his powers but his own perfect wiſdom, by which he muſt know what is fit and proper to be done.

I have ſaid, his perfect wiſdom, which muſt always bear an exact proportion to his power. —Every defect is an imperfection, and every imperfection implies a limitation, and conſequently a defect of power.—But where can be the defect of his power, when, as was juſt now obſerved, it can be limited only by his own perfect wiſdom and underſtanding—Some minute philoſophers pretend that abſolute power does not imply abſolute perfection: They are wrong, and do not well underſtand what they ſay—: Wherever the perfection of power is, there is abſolute perfection of every kind—the

perfection of wiſdom, the perfection of goodneſs, the perfection of all thoſe divine, amiable excellencies and perfections that conſtitute the character of God.

None who believe the Creator to be an intelligent being, can entertain a doubt of his having a perfect knowledge of himſelf, and his own perfections and powers; and ſure he muſt have the moſt perfect and thorough knowledge of what he himſelf hath made.

In this comprehenſive knowledge is founded and conſiſts what we call *wiſdom*; which is no more but the knowledge of what is fit and proper to be done; or, what are the beſt and moſt excellent deſigns, and the fitteſt and moſt proper means for effecting them.—There have been, perhaps there ſtill is, a ſet of men who call themſelves philoſophers, who in the pride of their philoſophy, have, with unequalled boldneſs, taken upon them to chalk out the meaſures of divine wiſdom in the government of his creation, by defining what the Creator may, or may not do; and if their meaſures are not preciſely obſerved, then the Creator is wrong in his manner of conducting the government of the world.

Preſumptuous man! who thus pretends to dictate to the God of infinite wiſdom.—Happily for mankind, we live under the government of the

the God of perfect wiſdom and perfect goodneſs, who conducts the government of his creation ſo as finally to terminate in the happineſs of all who ſincerely love him. In the language of an inſpired writer, "The Lord God Omnipotant reigneth; let the earth rejoice, and the multitudes of the Iſles be glad".—Were the Creator no wiſer, and knew no better than theſe philoſophers do, he would think and act as they imagine he ſhould; and pitiable, indeed, would the world be under ſuch direction.

But we are not left to the imaginations of men, in forming our conceptions of divine wiſdom. We have it ſet before us, in the fulleſt and cleareſt light, in the frame of this ſenſible univerſe. But how little can we make of it? Some of the groſs outlines which fall under our obſervation, the wonderful mechaniſm of vegetable and animal bodies, and much more the ſtupendous mechaniſm of the heavens, under the influence of which all the operations of nature are conducted and carried on in the moſt perfect order and regularity,—the diſcoveries that have been made in theſe, have raiſed the pride of philoſophy. How unjuſtly do they value themſelves on their pretended knowledge, while the ſecret ſprings by which the whole is conducted, are as much hid from them as from the

the meaneſt peaſant. Theſe remain ſtill, and, for any thing we yet know, will remain for ever, the ſubject of the aſtoniſhment and admiration of that inconceivable power and wiſdom, which erected the ſtupenduous machine, and eſtabliſhed every part in ſuch exactneſs of order and regularity, that nothing but ignorance, and its common attendant, vanity and weakneſs, can find the ſmalleſt flaw or weakneſs in the conſtruction and mechaniſm of the ſyſtem of nature. The man who certainly knows what purpoſes the Creator deſigned to anſwer by the order he has eſtabliſhed in the ſyſtem of nature, which philoſophers call by the unmeaning term nature, or the courſe of nature; he may, and he only can pretend to judge of the works of the Moſt High. But where is the man that is capable of entering into the purpoſes, the views and deſigns of God? There is a depth, in all his councils and deſigns, that no created mind can fully comprehend or underſtand. The ways and works of God are inſcrutable by men; and, as we have it in the language of inſpiration, are paſt finding out. Perfect power, and perfect wiſdom, thus eſſentially united in the Creator, gives us the moſt perfect character,—the character of God. Such a character, as even an indifferent ſpectator of any judgement

ment muſt eſteem, revere and love: And in theſe all true worſhip lies. External worſhip is only the outward ſign and expreſſion of them. And did we know what the worſhip of God is, it would raiſe the heart to the higheſt tranſports of love, eſteem, reverence and adoration. This perfection of character in God, is the ſame with what is commonly called *goodneſs*, a term ill underſtood, and much miſtaken, in forming our conceptions of the All Perfect Being. We weakly imagine that nothing can be good, but what is good to us, or rather contributes to what is good for us. But real perfect goodneſs is quite another thing; it is a perfect, conſtant, and uncheangeable love, to what a perfect infallible underſtanding knows to be really good; and an equal abhorrence of all that is evil. What is good, or what is evil to God, none but himſelf can ſay. This, however, we may ſay with confidence, That he loves all that is good, amiable and worthy among men; ſuch diſpoſitions as will raiſe the heart to the higheſt tranſports of love, affection and gratitude to him.

It is from the model that every man carries in his own mind, that all our notions of divine perfections, and of divine goodneſs, are formed, and our natural bias is ſo irreſiſtibly ſtrong to the preſervation of life, thence we take our meaſures

ſures of good and evil; and hence we imagine, that nothing can be good but what is good to us, or tends to our ſupport, our comfort and happineſs in life. This is not what can be called abſolute good; that is known only to the Creator, who knows beſt what univerſal good is, and what is beſt for the happineſs of his creation. It is only among creatures ſuch as we are, that good and evil can be found; for we muſt conceive of the divine perfections of God as being abſolutely above being affected by any thing without himſelf, as he muſt be incapable either of any addition to, or diminution of his pleaſure and happineſs. What promotes the real happineſs of the creature muſt be good; and what marrs or prevents his happineſs, muſt be evil in the view of the creature. But of this the perfect wiſdom of God alone can judge. And hence perfect goodneſs muſt be the moſt terrible attribute to an ill being, as he who is poſſeſſed of it, muſt as certainly puniſh and deſtroy the evil, as cheriſh and ſupport the good. It is hardly neceſſary to obſerve, that the Creator of all, muſt be the abſolute, the ſovereign proprietor of every being; and conſequently is poſſeſſed of an abſolute right to diſpoſe of them and employ them, for anſwering what purpoſes he pleaſes; that is, for anſwering ſuch purpoſes

as

as to his perfect wiſdom ſhall ſeem meet and fit. In this view, no creature can be poſſeſſed of any property, not even ſo much as their own life and being: for as he is the great ſource and fountain of life, has life in himſelf, and gives, and communicates life to all his creatures; ſo no creature can have any property in his life, any farther than as a truſt committed to him by an act of pure ſovereign grace; and he has an abſolute right to call his creatures to account for that life which he hath given them, and their improvement of it. And hence the fundamental law of nature, that no creature can ſubſiſt but by the mere grace and pleaſure of the Creator. None of them have, or can have, nor ever acquire any right to life, or the powers and capacities of life, unleſs he is pleaſed to give it by a free ſovereign act of grace. And who that ſees the creature ſtate of man, the perfection of infinite wiſdom, of infinite goodneſs, in conducting and carrying on the great purpoſes of grace and mercy to men, but muſt feel the grateful heart raiſed up to the ſupreme love of God and of goodneſs?

God being thus the abſolute Sovereign, nothing can be more abſurd, more unworthy of a creature, than to confine his adminiſtration to to the meaſure of what is called moral government.

ment. It has been already obſerved, that there are men who with confidence take upon them to chalk out the meaſures of divine government, and to ſay what he ſhould, and ſhould not do. It is arrogant in man to preſcribe the meaſures of the Moſt High. The Judge of all the earth doth righteouſly, and has an abſolute right to execute all the purpoſes of his good pleaſure in Heaven and in earth, among all the orders of created beings. What I mean by the meaſures of moral government, are the meaſures of human wiſdom: and to pretend that the Creator, in the government of his world, muſt be ſubjected to theſe, is the higheſt preſumption a creature is capable of. Unleſs the Creator himſelf had condeſcended to declare that he would follow ſome meaſures, what changes he ſees fit to make in his world, at what time, and in what manner, are queſtions which the higheſt order of creatures can ſay nothing at all about: But we are ſure, the whole is conducted under the direction of the moſt perfect unerring wiſdom, ſo conducted as finally to terminate in the good, the happineſs of all the virtuous and worthy part of his creation: But the reaſons of his conduct in his divine adminiſtration, cannot be comprehended by any underſtanding leſs perfect than his own.

Theſe

Theſe are truths, and truths of ſuch an important kind, that no one can entertain the ſmalleſt doubt of them, who believes creation; but there are many things we have no doubt of, things of the greateſt moment and importance, which yet are ſo little attended to by us, as not at all to influence us, either in our ſpeculations, or our actions in life; and pity it is, that the important truths we know do not more influence the heart, and lead us to that conduct in life that is worthy of the creatures, the rational, the intelligent creatures of God. We find ourſelves ſome how or other in the poſſeſſion of what we call *life* and *being*, with the perfections and powers of life; theſe we look upon as our own, and accordingly value ourſelves upon them, and find a ſenſible pleaſure in the gratifications they afford us—while, at the ſame time, we know with certainty that the next moment may, and, in a little time, we know well death well put an end to them all: And whether that does not make a final end of our being and exiſtence, who could have ſaid, if the Creator had not told us? Many ſpecious, and, I believe, ſerious arguments have been uſed, by men of diſtingiſhed abilities, for proving the natural immortality of the ſoul: They meant well: they were the friends of virtue

and goodneſs.—The celebrated Mr Addiſon, whoſe memory I revere, wrote, in ſome of his papers, on that ſubject—I have a very high value for his writings, but muſt be allowed to ſay, that the natural immortality of any created being is an abſurdity that cannot go down with the thinking and ſenſible part of mankind: the immortality of every created being muſt depend on the *will* of the Creator:—ſo abſolutly is every creature in his hand, that it is truly aſtoniſhing how ſuch an abſurd notion could ever have entered the heart or head of man, to think of the natural immortality of any of them—This is a privilege no creature can have without being altogether independent of the Creator: I therefore conclude, in the words of an inſpired writer, "that life and immortality is brought to light only by the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt."

In tracing the divine character, the character of God, it would be unpardonable to omit the aſtoniſhing care of divine providence in conducting and carrying on, for a ſeries of ſome thouſand years, the great plan of the diſpenſation of grace to men, as it is eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt—Did we know that degree of love and goodneſs that is there manifeſted to men; and did we know the manner in which it has been conducted, for it has been a peculiar ob-

ject

ject of divine providence; all the changes and alterations that have happened in ſtates and Empires having been conducted ſo as to carry on, and bring to its full perfection, this great plan of divine providence: for the material world is kept up and preſerved in its preſent ſtate, only for the ſake of its connection with, and for carrying on and finiſhing the great purpoſes of the ſpiritual world:—Did we ſee all this, and did we feel its power and influence upon our heart, it would lead the heart of man to the ſupreme love of God, and of goodneſs—It would lead us to the love of all that is amiable and worthy in his creation. The manner in which the plan of divine grace was conducted, merits a particular attention—The hiſtory of the Old Teſtament ſets it before us in a clear point of view. Lord Bolingbrooke finds great fault with Scripture Hiſtory. To confeſs a truth, his Lordſhip was a deiſt, and wiſhed to traduce revelation, becauſe he did not believe it:—But I mean to mention him now only as an author, an author of merit. He finds, I have already ſaid, great fault with Scripture Hiſtory:—he finds ſo many inconſiſtencies in the Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, that he pronounces it no Hiſtory at all. His Lordſhip, with all deference to his judgment, viewed it in

a wrong point of light: He conſidered it as a hiſtory of the Jewiſh nation: It never was meant to be ſo. Had his Lordſhip viewed it in another light, the light in which it ought to be viewed, as the *Hiſtory of God*—(by which I, mean, the hiſtory of his woks and ways, through the ſucceſſive ages of the world, in carrying on the great plan of the diſpenſation of grace to men through his Bleſſed Son:)— Had his Lordſhip, I ſay it again, viewed it in this light, all the ſeeming inconſiſtencies he finds fault with would have vaniſhed and diſappeared: For there God has graciouſly manifeſted himſelf to men, as the greateſt, the wiſeſt, the beſt of all beings—

Such are the great outlines of the character of God: May they influence the hearts of men, ſo as to lead them to the ſupreme love of God, and of all goodneſs, that they may be raiſed up to a fitneſs and meetneſs for the everlaſting enjoyment of himſelf in his heavenly kingdom, where perfect love, perfect peace, perfect enjoyment and perfect happineſs for ever reigns,

ESSAYS, &c.

ESSAY VIII.

On Self Knowledge.

THE knowledge of *one's self* has, in all ages and in all nations in the civilized parts of the world, been conſidered as an important branch of knowledge. Every one thinks he knows himſelf: It is certainly believed to be the eaſieſt, the ſimpleſt thing in the world; and yet, perhaps, there is no branch of knowledge in which mankind have more univerſally failed. The knowledge of ourſelves, to know it to purpoſe, is of infinitely higher conſequence to man than is commonly attended to. What is it to know ourſelves? It is a ſerious intereſting queſtion. It is to know ourſelves as the creatures of God, dependent, indigent, and guilty creatures, but formed by him with ſuch powers, and capacities, as will raiſe us up, by a proper improvement of them, to the moſt perfect and complete happineſs that human nature is capable

of being raiſed up to,—to the full enjoyment of God: And it may be affirmed with confidence, that all the folly that prevails ſo much in the world; all the miſery and unhappineſs of man, is owing either to the want, or imperfection of this knowledge. Many attempts have been made to give us what is called the knowledge of *human nature*, or the frame and conſtitution of mankind; and, after all that has been ſaid upon it, it does not ſeem to be well underſtood: Some have raiſed it up and exalted it to ſuch a degree of innate dignity and worth, as would ſeem to come little ſhort of perfection, excepting only the limitation they are forced to acknowledge from the want of power—Some others, on this ſerious ſubject, from their narrow, contracted views, have ſunk man to ſuch a degree of meanneſs as the great Creator never intended it ſhould be reduced to. Theſe different views of human nature lead to an obſervation, which it is very natural to make: That the knowledge of ourſelves, the knowledge of human nature, is not yet well underſtood. Inſtances of both theſe views of man might eaſily be produced, and the conſequences charged upon them are of a very intereſting nature:—perhaps it is difficult to ſay, though both are dangerous, which of them are moſt ſo.—Did

we

we know ourſelves, and know human nature better; and did we know the poweres of the human mind better than we yet do, the views, the ſentiments of man, with regard to human nature, would be very different from what they yet are. I have mentioned the two different views of human nature, with regard to the knowledge of ourſelves: and were I to hazard a ſentiment, which I hope is not unworthy of human nature, I would ſay, that no one's principles of action in life will ever riſe higher than the views he has of the dignity of his own mind. If thoſe are mean, low, and grovelling, his conduct and manner in life will correſpond with theſe ſentiments; if, on the contrary, man thinks well and worthily of himſelf, as the creature of God, and formed by him for being raiſed up to the higheſt degree of perfection and happineſs that any order of created beings are capable of being raiſed up to: Did we know this, and did we know the influence theſe feelings have on the human heart, they would raiſe up the heart of man, to all that dignity of ſentiment that is worthy of *human nature*: to the views of all that worth and excellence that human nature is capable of being raiſed up to. I know well, what is a ſtriking truth, that *pride* was never made for *man*; meekneſs and humility

ty are Chriſtian virtues that are worthy of, and highly becoming the Chriſtian character, of which we have the moſt illuſtrious example, in the moſt dignified character that ever was known in the world,—that of the Son of God. In this life, he ſhowed that meekneſs and humility of heart that is worthy of the Chriſtian name: but all this humility is perfectly conſiſtent with that dignity of mind and correſponding dignity of conduct that has been mentioned: of this, likewiſe, we have a ſtriking example, in the life and character of the great Author of our religion.—With all that meekneſs and humility of heart which he poſſeſſed, was there ever ſuch a dignified character and conduct known among men? and, let me obſerve, for it is worthy of attention, the life and ſoul of Chriſtanity, of true religion, lies in having our hearts and lives formed upon the divine life and character of the Son of God; in the language of inſpiration, it is to have the ſame mind in us that was in the bleſſed Jeſus—to walk even as he walked, to have that ſupreme love to God, that piety and devotion of heart, that charity, love, and good will to men, that heavenly-mindedneſs, thoſe clear and accurate views of a preſent world, with all the purpoſes it was intended to anſwer, with that reſignation to the will

of

of God, all of which ſhone forth ſo illuſtriouſly in the whole of his divine life and character: Theſe are the great lines of that religion we have given us in the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt.

A likeneſs to the Son of God is the higheſt degree of perfection and happineſs that human nature is capable of being raiſed up to. It might perhaps be reaſonably expected that a matter of enquiry, of which every one ought to carry the original within his own breaſt, ſhould neither be a very difficult nor intricate ſtudy; that no more ſhould be neceſſary than to look into one's ſelf, and examine the ſtate of his own mind, and compare that with what he obſerves in others. But neither of theſe ariſe ſo readily to the mind as might reaſonably be imagined. And it is truly aſtoniſhing, that, after the experience of near ſix thouſand years, man ſhould not have known himſelf much better than he yet does. But the misfortune of mankind has ever been, to be too much intereſted in what lies *without* us, to attend, as we ought, to what lies *within*. We think only of what gives pleaſure, or contributes to our preſent enjoyment and happineſs, without looking into the conſtitution of our own frame.

We

We enter into the world we know not how: We come into life and being in an indigent, and abſolutely dependent ſtate. But we forget that we were once children. The manner in which the human mind is reared up, and raiſed to maturity, is for the moſt part forgot by men: We find ourſelves raiſed up to powers and capacities for acting in, and enjoying the comforts that life is intended by the great Author of life to give to men: But we ſeldom look farther.—The buſineſs and enjoyments of a preſent life, generally engage our attention ſo much, that we forget the intimate connection between the material and ſpiritual world. We forget the great views, the plan of the great Creator, who we are ſure prepared the material ſyſtem, and fitted it up as a ſcene of diſcipline-ſhip for man: where the human mind was to be raiſed up, under the influence of the Spirit of grace, to a fitneſs and meetneſs for the enjoyment of all that happineſs that is to be enjoyed in a more perfect ſtate of exiſtence. All we can call our own, if it can with propriety be called our own, is a capacity of improvement; and of growing up to the higheſt meaſure of perfection and happineſs the human frame will admit of: And when is it we acquire theſe meaſures of perfection and happineſs? Never, till

we

we are raiſed up to the exalted views, and have our hearts and lives formed upon that conſtitution of grace which is eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt. When we come to know what is the proper buſineſs and uſe of reaſon and underſtanding, which is, when we come to know what is our proper buſineſs in life, I mean that which is aſſigned to man by the great Creator; What, after all, do we know more than what we learn from thoſe who have been in the world before us? except what nature leads us to,—the ſatisfying our conſtitutional cravings and appetites. Abſtracting from theſe, the human mind is chiefly formed by imitation:—In this way, from the powers of the human mind, we may be inſtructed in the knowledge of what is called the miſtreſs-ſcience, or the doctrine of morals; this is very good ſo far as it goes, and may anſwer the purpoſes of a preſent life, if we have only as much diſcernment as to know what conſtitutes the happineſs of life. I have mentioned the doctrine of morals, only ſo far as they influence our conduct in a preſent life; and there propriety of conduct is to be directly attended to.

But what is happineſs? and what conſtitutes happineſs? and how is it acquired? are ſerious queſtions; and they merit a ſerious anſwer.

What

What is happineſs? As it is defined by philoſophers, it is the ſupreme, the chief good to men. But the queſtion ſtill recurs, What is good? What is the chief good? It is an univerſal principle in human nature to wiſh for what we call happineſs. But, unfortunately for mankind, we in general miſtake what happineſs is, where it lies, or what conſtitutes it, and how it is to be obtained.—Let me aſk again, What is happineſs? It is being raiſed to that ſtate of mind which the Creator originally intended mankind ſhould be capable of being raiſed up to, by the full enjoyment of all the happineſs that is only to be found in him who is the fountain of life and happineſs.—What I have juſt now obſerved, prevents my ſaying any thing with regard to what conſtitutes happineſs, or wherein it conſiſts. But the acquiring of happineſs, and the manner in which it is to be acquired, is of importance for man to know. It is, by having our hearts raiſed up, under the influence of the ſpirit of grace, to ſuch worthy and exalted views of the divine character; the divine excellencies and perfections as they are manifeſted to mankind in Jeſus Chriſt, as will lead the heart to the ſupreme love of God, and of goodneſs. And there, if there is happineſs in the creation of God, there true happineſs lies;

lies, and this is the way, the only way, by which we can come to the enjoyment of it. In this eſſay, I am led to obſerve, what every one allows, that there is an order of beings in the creation of God quite different from men. It is true, it may be ſaid this is not neceſſary to the knowledge of ourſelves. But did we know ourſelves to purpoſe, we would ſee the neceſſity we are under of knowing there are different orders of beings; by theſe I mean pure ſpirits: and we would know further, the propriety of conduct, the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in the eſtabliſhment of different orders of beings in his creation.

That there are certain inviſible powers in the univerſe, immenſely above the human, will be readily allowed by all who know any thing of the conſtitution of nature; and that ſome how or other we are under their influence, or at their mercy, is as generally believed. Hence that ſuperſtitious awe and dread we naturally have of ſpirits. The apprehenſion of ſeeing what we call an inviſible being, that is, a being that is not human, fills us with terror; we ſhudder at the very thought, even though we were aſſured they were to do us no harm. Such is the weakneſs of our frame, that we are very naturally led to give a particular attention to theſe things

which we obſerve to have the greateſt influence on the human frame, ſuch as the ſun, moon, and ſtars, clouds, winds, &c. And if ever there was a time when the powers of the material heavens, fire, light, and air, were well underſtood, and proper obſervations made on their natural effects, the firſt idolatry that ever was in the world, would be the worſhip of theſe powers.—And, let me obſerve, it was the moſt natural idolatry, after the knowledge of the true God was loſt, that could enter the head or heart of man; for, let me further obſerve, where the knowledge of the true God was well underſtood, there the trinity of perſons in the divine eſſence was well known; this was early manifeſted to man in the exhibition of the cherubim at the eaſt of Paradiſe, immediately after the fall; and the knowledge of this important truth, was kept alive among men ſo long as they retained the knowledge of the true God. Let me add, beſides, the emblematical repreſentation the Creator had given of this truth in the figure of the cherubim, he had likewiſe given a ſenſible repreſentation of it in the mechanical powers of the material heavens, which have been already mentioned. But when men, in the language of inſpiration, became vain in their imaginations, and loſt the knowledge of the true

true God, thoſe who underſtood the mechaniſm of the heavens, ſubſtituted the powers of the heavens, and worſhipped them inſtead of the true God; this perhaps was the origin of all the idolatry that has ever been in the world. I have ſaid that the Creator has given a ſenſible repreſentation of himſelf, of that important truth, the knowledge of three perſons in the divine eſſence, in the mechanical powers of the material heavens; and it is owing to miſtaken views of the ſyſtem of nature; a want of the knowledge of the mechaniſm of nature, that this is not much better underſtood than it is. The powers of the heavens, it is highly probable, continued to be the object of worſhip till men loſt even the knowledge of theſe, and came to worſhip, as great numbers ſtill do, they know not what, as the apoſtle emphatically expreſſes it, an Unknown God.

This leads to a diſcovery, the diſcovery of a truth, which is of importance for us to know, in order to know ourſelves,—the weakneſs of the human intellectual powers. In order to form a proper judgment of theſe, and bring the matter to a fair trial, we have only two ways of judging, either by what they have done, or can do, or be rendered capable of doing.—What they have done, we have ſeen, from facts that

are well inſtructed; but what they are capable of doing, it is impoſſible to ſay with any degree of certainty; in this caſe we can only reaſon from analogy, and judge of what the intellectual powers of man can do, or are capable of doing, from what they have done.—And what have they done? After the Creator had diſcovered himſelf to man, which he did in a very extraordinary manner, at his creation, and was inſtructed by the moſt infallible evidence, which one would think it was impoſſible to loſe ſight of, after ſuch a full and clear diſcovery; yet man loſt that important piece of knowledge, the knowledge of God —And can we ſuppoſe that, after this diſcovery was made to him, in ſo full and ample a manner, and yet after all the knowledge of it was totally loſt, that man is capable of making the diſcovery, if it had never been made to him? It muſt be acknowledged to be a very wrong and unfair way of judging, to reaſon from the knowledge of thoſe who have revelation in their hands; it is only in infants and untaught men, that we can ſee pure nature. All tradition muſt be excluded; and yet this is impoſſible; for tradition has been in the world ever ſince the world exiſted. Yet, in order to judge with fairneſs of the human intellectual powers, we muſt ſuppoſe that no revelation, nor no tradition

tion of it, ever was in the world; for it is then only we could be able to judge of the extent of the human powers, in reaſoning from nature.

I have ſaid that the worſhip of the powers of the heavens was the firſt idolatry that ever was in the world. It was the moſt natural.—When men loſt the knowledge of God, they ſubſtituted that figurative repreſentation he had given of himſelf in his place, and worſhipped it as God: We have a remarkable and ſtriking inſtance of this, in the attempt that was made after the deluge to build the tower of Babel. This memorable event has been placed, very injudiciouſly, in a moſt ridiculous light.—As an attempt to build a tower, whoſe top ſhould reach to the material heavens, that they might there be ſafe in the event of a ſecond deluge; and there, we are told, what is called the confuſion or diverſity of languages began.

Could there be a more ridiculous or abſurd plan concerted, than to think of building this tower in a low valley, when there were ſeveral high mountains around them, had they intended, as our tranſlators have rendered it, that its top ſhould reach to heaven? Why not make choice of one of the higheſt mountains to build upon, which would have ſaved them a

great deal of building? The whole account we have of it, is ridiculous to an extreme. Had our tranſlators underſtood the original better, they would have repreſented it in a very different light—The truth is, that ſoon after the deluge, notwithſtanding the aſtoniſhing diſplay of divine power the Creator had given to man, by ſhowing he had all the powers of nature under his command, and at his controul, by his power of reverſing the eſtabliſhed laws of nature; I ſay it again, notwithſtanding of all this, ſuch was the degeneracy of the human race, that they again loſt the knowledge of the true God, and again ſubſtituted in his place, the powers of the material heavens, and paid their adoration to them: This led them to the mad project of building a tower or temple, the top of which, I do not ſay ſhould reach to heaven, but ſhould be ſacred to the worſhip of the powers of the heavens; this view, the original well underſtood, will bear; and it is, perhaps, the moſt juſt account that can be given of that intereſting event: What we are told about confounding their language, the original word means, confounding their *lips* or religion; that is, they differed and fell out about their *liturgy*, or form of worſhip: This view, I apprehend, makes the whole paſ-

ſage,

ſage, from the account we have of it, quite conſiſtent, and eaſily underſtood—This leads us to ſee the original depravity of the human heart, and how early mankind loſt the knowledge of the true God.—The Antedeluvian world had given us a convincing proof of this melancholy truth long before this period. It is not eaſy to be accounted for, how mankind loſt the knowledge of God, after he had ſo fully and clearly manifeſted and made himſelf known to man. I may be told, that the wickedneſs of the human heart, a conſequence of the original tranſgreſſion, led the hearts of men off from God, led them to look for, and endeavour to find, that happineſs in the creature, that is only to be found in the Creator. I allow all this: But how ſhould all this have led men off from the knowledge of the true God? We know the Antedeluvians had great longevity: They taught their children, before writing was introduced, this important truth, the knowledge of God, and all that was connected with that knowledge; and they again taught the ſame great truths to their children: thus tradition was handed down from one age to another—How then came the knowledge of God to be loſt among men? How comes it that there are ſo many ſavage nations in the world,

world, who know nothing of God? whence came that want of the knowledge of God among any of mankind—It will not do to ſay that many nations of the world had not revelation; for revelation has been in the world ever ſince the world exiſted; how then came any of mankind to loſe the knowledge of God? It is not a ſufficient anſwer; to ſay, there are many nations of the world who have not revelation, and therefore cannot have the knowledge of God—revelation as it was originally given to man was univerſal.

I cannot allow, with Lord Kaimes that there was a ſecond creation, who had neither revelation, nor any tradition of it. How is this inſtructed? It is not inſtructed by any thing that can give ſufficient evidence to man.

His Lordſhip finds a ſecond creation neceſſary, in order to account for the peopling of America. How was America peopled? ſays he; for he finds a difficulty in accounting for the peopling of it from Aſia or Europe.—To get over this difficulty, he ſuppoſes there was a ſecond creation, the ſeat of which he places in Mexico, which is about the centre between North and South America; he places it there, becauſe, when the New World was diſcovered, Mexico was found to be the moſt poliſhed, civi-

lized,

lized, and refined of any nation in that great continent.—I venerate Lord Kaimes as a man of taſte, of learning, genius and abilities; but I find myſelf obliged to differ in ſentiment from him. —Even allowing all that he ſays, which I do not, I would aſk him how this ſecond creation is inſtructed? It is not inſtructed, if we have no authentic accounts of it from any hiſtory that ever was in the world: the truth is, it cannot be inſtructed; becauſe it never exiſted. We have every reaſon to believe that America was peopled from the eaſtern part of Aſia, I mean the eaſt northern part; between which, and Weſt Greenland the communication is very ſhort, and might be accompliſhed in a very ſhort time. I pretend not to ſay that America was peopled in this manner, but I think probability gives ſome ground for ſuppoſing it. I have only to add to this part of the Eſſay, I do not believe there was a ſecond creation, nor have we any documents whatever to inſtruct it.

I now return to my former queſtion: How came any of mankind to loſe the knowledge of God, when revelation was firſt univerſal? The anſwer is chronological, hiſtorical, and philoſophical: and I leave it to chronologiſts, hiſtorians, and philoſophers to determine; for it would lead

lead me much beyond my intention to anſwer this important queſtion, in the views that have been mentioned.

To know ourſeves well, as the creatures of God, and creatures made capable, by powers and abilities given us, for being raiſed up to the enjoyment of a bleſſed and glorious immortality, it is of importance to know our intimate connection with, and abſolute dependence on the Creator, and the knowledge of the important truths he has given to man; by the proper improvement of which, under the influence of the Spirit of Grace, man is capable of being raiſed up to the everlaſting enjoyment of all that happineſs that is to be enjoyed in the regions of perfect love and perfect knowledge. I have mentioned the neceſſity of our knowing the important truths the Creator has communicated to man.

We think we know much with regard to God, and the moral government of this world; but did we know ourſelves, we would know how little we are capable of knowing.—What are the truths we are taught by the God of truth? They are of the utmoſt conſequence to man to know.

They are of conſequence and ought to be ſeriouſly attended to by mankind. What are theſe truths?

Modern

Modern philoſophers and natural theologians, deceive themſelves, and miſlead their followers: They find certain facts and truths current in the world, and they flatter themſelves with the belief, that they are natural to the human mind. They inſiſt that they are juſt as natural to man, and as much a part of his conſtitution, as inſtincts are to birds and beaſts. They are far from being ſo; all the experience in the world is againſt it. They will be found, upon the ſtricteſt enquiry, to reach no farther than the correſponding animal inſtincts in man; unleſs the capacity of being made capable of being formed by imitation.

Human knowledge can reach no farther than human obſervation; whatever exceeds the bounds of that, is unknown to man, unleſs he receives information about them from ſome ſuperior being who has obſerved them. And all the important truths of divine revelation, we come to the knowledge of in this manner. We are taught by God the knowledge of himſelf, the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, as the Son of God, and great Saviour of the world, and the knowledge of all the happineſs we have the hope and proſpect of in the heavenly ſtate. If ſuch facts as none but the Creator, the Sovereign of heaven and earth, has communicated, revealed

to

to man, ſuch as none but he could poſſibly reveal to man;—if we find that theſe truths are received and firmly believed; in the record and teſtimony of ſuch facts muſt be a divine revelation; and to this revelation we owe all the knowledge we have of a future ſtate of exiſtence. We value ourſelves upon powers and capacities which we think are our own. We little think of their being beſtowed upon us by God;—and we think not of the powers and capacities of mind he has given us for knowing all this.—Did we know all this, and did we know the manner in which it was communicated to man, we would have much higher, and more exalted views both of the Creator and of human nature. Our views of the Creator would riſe in proportion to our knowledge of his divine character,—of that grace, mercy, and goodneſs he has manifeſted to men; and our views of human nature, of ourſelves, would riſe in proportion to our knowledge of that happineſs the Creator has formed us capable of being raiſed up to the enjoyment of, by his diſpenſation of grace to men. There is an important truth, which is of the utmoſt conſequence to mankind to know. Whether death makes a full and final end of mankind or not, as is generally allowed it does of other animals, who could ſay without an expreſs revelation

lation to aſcertain it. We talk of the natural immortality of the ſoul, and think we are right; but we talk at random. The natural immortality of any creature is an abſurdity that cannot go down with any man of ſound reaſon; for it muſt depend on the will of the Creator.

This intereſting truth is ſet in the cleareſt light by the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, without which we could never have known it: And this opening up of the hopes and proſpects of life, eternal life and immortality to man, in the manner the God of love and truth has given it to man, is the moſt aſtoniſhing diſplay of divine love and goodneſs that ever was manifeſted to any order of created beings. On this ſubject, I am led to another obſervation. The polythiſm that was ſo univerſally received, could never have taken its riſe from reaſoning; for all the reaſon in the world could never have led mankind to ſuppoſe a plurality of deities,—for a good reaſon,—the perfect poſſeſſion of life and being, with all the powers and perfections of it, cannot poſſibly ſubſiſt but in one Supreme Being, the great author and poſſeſſor of life, and the great ſupporter and maintainer of it. Something may be ſaid for the heathen world, after they had loſt the knowledge of the Creator, and ſubſtituted the heavens, and their ſenſible

powers, which, it has been obſerved, was the firſt idolatry in the world, in his room:—In other words, they worſhipped the heavens, and their ſenſible powers, as God. But how came the notion of a Trinity, in the exiſtence of Deity, ever to be thought of by men? Why three rather than three hundred? Yet the tradition is very ancient;—Plato did not coin it, as appears from his blundering and unintelligible accounts of it. He had it from tradition; yet his account of it is not more blundering than that of ſome philoſophical divines who have attempted it, and who have had much ſuperior advantages to him, who had his information from obſcure tradition only. I have already obſerved, that there are ſome circumſtances with regard to the future ſtate of mankind that merit a particular attention:—it is the manner in which men are to be fitted and trained up for the enjoyment of everlaſting happineſs. This is highly intereſting for man to know:—It is a ſerious thing to die, and eternity is an awful thought, though it is but too little minded; the buſineſs, the pleaſures, the enjoyments of a preſent life, engage our attention too much, and we think too little of preparing for a ſtate of endleſs felicity. I do not call our preſent ſtate, as it has been often called, a ſtate of trial and probation;

probation; that is ſuppoſing too much in the power of man; I call it a ſtate of diſciplineſhip, where we are to be raiſed up, under the influence of the Spirit of Grace, which the great Saviour of mankind hath, as we are told in the language of inſpiration, purchaſed for all who believe in him; raiſed up, I have ſaid, to a fitneſs and meetneſs for the everlaſting enjoyment of that happineſs that is to be enjoyed in the heavenly ſtate. Still, however, it muſt be attended to, that man muſt exert the powers and abilities which God has given him, and cultivate theſe diſpoſitions of heart which the Goſpel of Chriſt requires.

It is in the manner I have mentioned at ſome length, that mankind are to be fitted up to a capacity for reliſhing and enjoying the happineſs of the heavenly ſtate. Theſe are views, which I hope will be found to be juſt; the only way in which we can be raiſed up to a likeneſs to the ſons of God, and prepared for the enjoyment of the heavenly happineſs.

It may perhaps be objected, that notwithſtanding of what has been ſaid, that the moſt barbarous and ſavage nations had ſome notions of ſuch a Being as we call God, and of ſome ſtate of exiſtence beyond the grave—as we call happineſs. It may be ſaid, there is a ſubſtan-

tial difference between good and evil, right and wrong—what we call virtue and vice; and in conſequence of that, have a conſcience either accuſing or excuſing. This may all be true. I allow it: But the notions and views of virtue and vice will be very different among men, according to their different ſituations. That there are ſuch things as virtue and vice, is univerſally acknowledged; but can it be imagined that all mankind, with or without revelation, ſhould have the ſame notions and views of thoſe? It is impoſſible. They muſt depend on the different degrees of civilization and refinement among mankind.—Rouſſeau has told us, in his Inquiry into the Effects of the Improvements of Arts and Sciences, that the improvement of them has had an unhappy tendency to deſtroy the intereſts of virtue and goodneſs among men. He inſiſts, that pure uncultivated nature will raiſe up men to higher degrees of virtue than the higheſt degree of civilization and refinement, with all the advantages of revelation, would do. Some years ago, I was importuned by a friend to write a criticiſm on this publication of his, which I did, and in which I inſiſted that he was quite wrong:—That the ſtate of uncultivated nature, which he mentions, is not the ſtate in which man

man is capable of being raiſed up to the higheſt degree of virtue and goodneſs that human nature is capable of.—What is virtue, and what is vice? We think we underſtand them well in common life, from the conduct of mankind in life. We do not underſtand them well. I ſpeak now upon Rouſſeau's principles of reaſoning. How come we to know that uncultivated nature, without revelation—without any degree of civilization, may be raiſed up to higher degrees of virtue and goodneſs in life than thoſe who are more refined and civilized? Rouſſeau has not inſtructed this I will allow, that in poliſhed and civilized nations there may be degrees—perhaps higher degrees of vice than is to be found among the uncultivated, barbarous, and ſavage; at the ſame time, I muſt be allowed to inſiſt that much higher degrees of virtue and goodneſs may be, and, I hope, often is acquired in a ſtate of civilization and refinement, than it is poſſible for a ſtate of rudeneſs and barbarity to acquire. After this obſervation on Rouſſeau, yet I will do him the juſtice to acknowledge, that he was an elegant writer; as ſuch, I have a high eſteem for his writings; but I muſt further obſerve, that his Sceptical principles led him to miſtaken views of human nature, and what conſtitutes the

happineſs of it. Were I to mention Voltaire in the ſame light, for we all know that he was a ſceptic, I would ſay, that his hiſtories are well wrote, but that his Optimiſt, and ſome of his other works, have been hurtful to the intereſts of virtue and goodneſs among men.

It is a truth not to be diſputed, that even among the moſt barbarous and ſavage nations, the notions of the exiſtence of a Being they called God, and the worſhip and regard due to him, and their notions of a future ſtate, have always been in the world, and are ſo ſtrongly rooted in the human heart, that the higheſt degree of ignorance and barbarity have never been able to eradicate them from the human mind. But the queſtion will ſtill return, How came they by theſe notions and ſentiments? That human reaſon and underſtanding could never have diſcovered them, we have this ſtrong preſumption, that the worſhip and manner of placating their Deity, that is, by ſacrifices, could never have entered the heart or head of man. How came ſacrifices ever to be thought of among men, for placating the Deity? It could never have entered the head of any man, if it had not been a divine inſtitution. Hence we are neceſſarily led to conclude, that the leading principle on which they depended,

mean

I mean the knowledge of a Creator and Supreme Governor of the world, came likewiſe from Revelation.

It muſt be acknowledged, that man, with reſpect to the whole both of his principles and practice in life, is entirely formed upon imitation and example, and is really no more than what cuſtom and uſe have made him. This perhaps may in ſome meaſure account for that obſtinate tenaciouſneſs which is ſo generally found among mankind, even with regard to the moſt glaringly abſurd and unreaſonable opinions, which too much influence and miſlead multitudes of mankind.

But the queſtion will ſtill recur, how they came there? I mean, how theſe notions and views of Deity came to be ſo univerſally received by man, and with ſuch a degree of authority as all the reaſon and philoſophy in the world could never eraſe them from the human mind. How this univerſal belief of a Deity was ſo very general among men, is a queſtion that merits ſome attention. It has been formerly obſerved, that revelation was univerſal to man, and that all the knowledge of God that ever was in the world, came from himſelf. That revelation which he has graciouſly given of himſelf to men, and that knowledge

of

of the great Creator, which he has given us of himſelf, has been handed down through all ages, and among all nations, by tradition, to this day. It may perhaps be ſaid, that the knowledge of a Creator is natural to man, from the bare inſpection of the viſible frame of nature. This will not do: it is falſe reaſoning.—I have taken particular notice of the extent of the human powers, in reaſoning from creation to the knowledge of a Creator, in a former eſſay; yet the knowledge of a Creator has been in the world ever ſince the world exiſted.

The univerſal belief of this important truth can only be accounted for from thoſe diſcoveries the Creator has made of himſelf, by his works and ways, to man. What lies beyond the reach of human perception, can never be the object of human obſervation. The exiſtence, therefore, of a Supreme Being, a Creator, could never be an object of human conception; as it lies quite beyond all the means of human perception. Men muſt have been far advanced in the art of reaſoning, before they could know, from the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of nature in the univerſe, that it had an intelligent cauſe; and even when this point was aſcertained, a difficulty ſtill remained—where to lodge this cauſe; whether in the frame of

nature

nature itſelf, whoſe mechanical powers in its conſtruction is able to ſupport itſelf, and carry on all the operations of nature; or whether it was in ſome ſuperior Being, altogether diſtinct from matter, and who had the property and ſupreme diſpoſal of all,—is a queſtion not ſo eaſily anſwered as ſome may imagine.

The laſt of theſe ſuppoſitions lies ſo far beyond the reach of human obſervation, that it may be conſidered as impoſſible. —This remark is verified by what the wiſeſt and moſt rational among the ancients reſted in, the notion of ſomething they called *a ſpirit*, pervading and influencing the whole world, in the ſame manner as our ſouls influence and actuate the human body. But whether this world, fitted up and furniſhed as it is for all the neceſſary ſupports and comforts of life to men, ever had a beginning; that is, was made, or, as we call it, *created*; or ſubſiſted in its preſent form from eternity,—remains to be determined. Men muſt have been greatly enlightened before they came the length of making this enquiry; and when it was made, the fartheſt they could go was to ſuppoſe that the materials of which the ſyſtem of nature was made up and compoſed, were lying in what was called a *Chaos*, and

and that God and nature brought this ſyſtem into the order in which it now appears. But that all was once nothing, could never be imagined, as they could have no idea of any power adequate to ſuch an effect as creation. Creation out of nothing, they could not conceive an idea of, as there are no veſtiges of a beginning, and no proſpect of an end. Here men's knowledge muſt have ſtopt ſhort, and their religion could go no farther; becauſe they wanted the only foundation on which religion can ſtand, the knowledge of creating power, and that creation was produced, brought into exiſtence by the Great Creator: For it is not conceivable, how abſolute property can be acquired without creation, nor that worſhip and religious ſervice obſerved which is due to the Creator. With regard to what they had either to hope or fear from their imaginary Deity, the whole heathen world were at a loſs to know. The Creator himſelf, after the knowledge of creation is eſtabliſhed, can alone make this diſcovery, and the knowledge of himſelf to man. With regard to our hopes and fears, I will ſay nothing; they are well known.

I only further obſerve, that till it was certainly proved and known, that the creation, the

the ſyſtem of univerſal nature, was the work of one intelligent and ſuperlatively wiſe Being, no idea could be formed of, and no inferences made from it about his character; but ſuppoſing that knowledge to be obtained, it would ſtill have remained a very doubtful matter—whether death did not make a final end of the man.—We talk of the natural immortality of the ſoul; but we talk at random. The immortality of any created being, muſt depend on the will of the Creator; nor can it be otherwiſe, unleſs we ſuppoſe them altogether independent of him. It is true, that life and immortality is brought to light by the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt; and it is there only we can come to the perfect knowledge of it. All the arguments for a future ſtate that have ever been urged, could never be made to riſe ſo high as a probability. Nothing but a plain declaration from the Creator himſelf, which he has graciouſly given, could have given mankind that important piece of knowledge.

What human reaſon could never give any account of, Moſes, abſtracting from the prophets and apoſtles, has ſet in the cleareſt light; the light in which the Creator intended the knowledge of theſe important truths ſhould be placed to man, and by a method infinitely more proper

per for anſwering that purpoſe than all the reaſoning in the world could ever have ſhown. Were we even to be ſo liberal as to allow the philoſophical arguments all the ſtrength and force they pretend to, they could be of no manner of uſe to the generality of mankind; they are not born to be philoſophers, and could therefore make nothing of philoſophical reaſoning, any farther than juſt to take the philoſopher's word for his concluſions, which is a degree of implicit faith that none of mankind have a right to demand of their fellow-creatures. Even the philoſopher himſelf will find that his own belief will laſt no longer than the force of his demonſtration keeps warm upon his mind; and, even then, the evidence ariſing from it is too ſubtile to make an impreſſion ſtrong enough to exclude all the grounds of doubt that may ariſe on the other ſide againſt his demonſtration. Something much better ſuited to the perceptive powers of man, is neceſſary to eſtabliſh a firm perſuaſion of what lies ſo much beyond the reach of our ſenſes, our perceptive powers, and common obſervation. This obſervation, when properly examined, will, I hope, be found to be ſtrictly juſt.

But

But what philoſophy could not do, Moſes has ſet in a clear and ſtriking light, in a ſimple and eaſy manner, ſuch as may be eaſily underſtood by mankind, by a number of well-inſtructed facts, calculated to inſtruct the human mind in the moſt important and intereſting truths, and to reach conviction of the truth of them to the human heart.

If his firſt aſſertion, that God created the heavens and the earth, ſtartles or ſhocks our underſtanding, and carries us much beyond the ſphere of human obſervation, and conſequently of human reaſon;—for, to confeſs a truth, it is much, I had almoſt ſaid infinitely beyond both;—yet he reconciles us to it by making it familiar to us, from a detail of the ſix days creation, and particularly the creation of *man*. And he afterwards inſtructs it by ſuch ſenſible facts as have incomparably more weight and influence on the human mind, than all the metaphyſical demonſtrations that have been uſed, though much ſtronger than they are, can ever be made to have, or be able to produce, by all the improvements they are capable of receiving. The particular detail of the ſix days creation, and the manner in which the order of the ſyſtem of nature was eſtabliſhed, brings to our obſervation a degree of power we could

have had no knowledge of without this information. This is what philoſophers have been long torturing and perplexing themſelves with gueſſing at; I mean the true ſyſtem of nature, and the moving powers that carry on all the operations in it, by which I mean the phyſical agency of the ſyſtem of nature. The manner in which the order of the univerſe was at firſt eſtabliſhed, has nothing in it that ſhocks human reaſon, unleſs it be the aſtoniſhing eaſe with which it was effected; and even that can be none, when we come to have clear and juſt views of that infinite Power, which is boundleſs and unlimited, and by which the creation was raiſed out of nothing into its preſent form, by a command, or mere act of volition; for, 'He ſpake, and it was done,—'He commanded, and all things were eſta-'bliſhed.' This leads us to an idea and conception of power, infinitely above what the moſt exalted geniuſes among mankind could ever have thought of—the power of raiſing this ſtupendous frame of nature out of nothing to the beautiful fabric we behold.

The creation of man, the circumſtances in which he was placed, the authority the Creator had a right to aſſume over him in his creation ſtate, and the conſequences of it, even from the

the ſhort hints which are recorded concerning thoſe events, bring us ſtill nearer to the view of, and makes creating power more familiar to us. All theſe, we have good reaſon to believe, were fully explained to, and well underſtood by thoſe principally concerned in theſe tranſactions. It merits attention here, that the fixing the permanent ſtate of mankind by a judicial ſentence, in which men are highly intereſted, could be done by none but the Creator,—the ſole proprietor of man, and of the earth on which he lived.

But mankind, in the firſt ages, were the ſame fooliſh and perverſe creatures that they are ſtill;—a ſtriking proof of the early perverſion of the human mind, and its being led off from God. Though they had the moſt convincing proofs, as we ſtill have in our firſt father's caſe, that it was impoſſible for them, or for us, or indeed for any creature, to ſubſiſt in any other way than by the mere grace of the Creator, and in an abſolute reſignation to his authority and will, yet in a courſe of time, the old world came fooliſhly and wickedly to neglect and forſake him, as we ſtill continue too much to do: This brought on a ſenſible demonſtration that he was indeed the Creator,—the ſovereign proprietor of heaven

and earth: This was done by an act of power which none but the Creator could exert; by ſuſpending the courſe of all the powers of nature, by reducing nature to its primitive ſtate, I mean that ſtate of univerſal chaos in which the rude elements of matter, of which the ſyſtem of nature was formed, was brought into its preſent form. This ſtate of nature could not be brought about but by a power ſuperior to all the powers of nature, which could not be done but by ſuſpending all the operative and active powers of nature, and by beginning what may be called a new origination of mankind. It will eaſily occur to the intelligent reader, that this obſervation refers to the univerſal *deluge*,—in which we have the moſt convincing proofs and inconteſtible evidence, that all the powers of nature were ſuſpended,—and was a convincing proof of the ſovereign power and authority of the Creator.

From the uſe of ſacrifices, during this period,—ſacrifices, which I have formerly obſerved could never have entered the heart or head of man, had they not been a divine inſtitution;—from them it evidently appears, that there was a revelation then ſubſiſting, the manner of conducting and carrying on the great plan of divine revelation, eſtabliſhed

for

for the ſalvation.—the happineſs of man.—This was ſenſibly inſtructed by the tranſlation of Enoch, which gives us the view of a life beyond the grave, brought to light; and by what Noah practiſed after the flood, chiefly with regard to the ſetting aſide the blood as an atonement for their lives and ſouls, and emblematical of that great ſacrifice which in the fullneſs of time was to be offered up, and of that precious blood that was ſhed upon the croſs, for the remiſſion of the ſins of fallen man.

What now are we to ſay? What are we to underſtand by knowing ourſelves?—It is an important queſtion: It is the knowing ourſelves to be the creatures of God, formed by his all-powerful creating hand, and placed in his world for anſwering great and important purpoſes; for being raiſed up, by propriety of conduct in life, under the divine influence of his ſpirit and grace, to a fitneſs and meetneſs for the everlaſting enjoyment of himſelf, in the regions of perfect love and knowledge.

ESSAYS, &c.

ESSAY IX.

On the Original State of Mankind.

It has been generally taken for granted, I know not with what propriety, that the firſt ages of the world were rude and barbarous, and that men, for many ages, were no better than ſuch ſavages, or worſe, if poſſible, as we meet with in the remote and moſt unpoliſhed parts of the world,—until by length of time, they were civilized by very ſlow degrees. To bring down our views from the Antedeluvian world to later times, the moſt civilized nations were Greece and Rome, whoſe anceſtors were unqueſtionably rude and barbarous: They knew that, and, for that reaſon, all the reſt of the world paſſed with them for barbarians.—Yet it is a fact that cannot be diſſembled, for it is well known, that from theſe barbarians they derived all their knowledge; I mean, all the facts by which their philoſophers were enabled to improve

prove philoſophy, promote the civilization of their country, and, I will only add, by which they were enabled to form rather uncertain gueſſes about philoſophy. I do not mean to ſay, that ſome of the ancients did not acquire a conſiderable knowledge of philoſophy: But I muſt be allowed to ſay, they had that knowledge from the facts they received from thoſe whom they called their barbarous anceſtors. Did the bounds intended for this Eſſay allow, it were eaſy to ſhow this by an induction of particulars —It is certain their predeceſſors were of a different opinion; for from them they had thoſe charming deſcriptions of the golden age, which degenerated by degrees into braſs, lead and iron, as they came to be ſcattered abroad on the face of the earth, in conſequence of which, they loſt the knowledge of the original facts on which all religion and morality, that is, all the right meaſures of human knowledge, were founded; and thus fell from a courſe of innocence and virtue, to a courſe of error, wickedneſs, and the moſt egregious folly. The plain originals of that tradition is given us by Moſes, in his deſcription of paradiſe, and the ſtate of our firſt parents there.

That deſcription is much ſuperior to what the moſt luxuriant and correct fancy could poſ-

ſibly

ſibly imagine. It is plain that the garden of Paradiſe was a complete abridgement or epitome of the univerſe; and a collection of every thing that was valuable in it; they were arranged by perfect wiſdom in the moſt agreeable, regular, and inſtructive manner: As man was to be inſtructed in the knowledge of his Creator through the medium of his works,—the viſible creation, ſo the Creator, by the arrangement of paradiſe, ſet the creation as it were in miniature before him, that, under the direction of his divine preceptor, he might be led to that knowledge. From thence, unqueſtionably, man was to gather, or find exemplified, all the works of his Creator which perfect wiſdom ſaw neceſſary for him to know in that ſtation, and all the knowledge that could ariſe from his knowledge of it. But how far this knowledge extended, it is impoſſible for us to ſay, from the ſhort hints Moſes has given us. We know the Creator taught him language, and converſed with him in it: He ſummoned the animal brute creation before him, and directed him to give them names deſcriptive of their natures, on which all language is founded; for, as I have obſerved in a former Eſſay, language, taken in its full extent, is the univerſe ſubſiſting in ſound. It is natural to ſuppoſe, that the creatures

creatures diſplayed their ſeveral talents before him, and hence he had an opportunity, ſuch as no man ever had, or could have, of taking in the whole compaſs of what we call natural hiſtory. Thoſe who underſtand the Hebrew language well, and the import of the names he gave, will be ſurpriſed at his ſagacity, in giving them names ſo deſcriptive of their reſpective natures, talents, and diſpoſitions. We have no account of his giving names to the trees and plants of the garden, nor to the heavenly bodies, which were obvious to his ſenſes: All theſe were before him, and needed not to be brought as the beaſts and birds were.

Here a queſtion will very naturally ariſe,—how came the firſt man by all this amazing power of reaſon and underſtanding, ſo as to be qualified for ſuch a taſk? It is true, that by his ſenſes, as his body was at firſt formed, he might perceive all the material objects about him, as the mere brute part of the creation do; andmany of them are endued with far ſtronger, and therefore it may be ſaid, with more perfect organs of ſenſe, than we are; ſeeing and hearing in particular. But reaſon and underſtanding are quite of another nature; they are not perceptive powers, but regulate and improve our ſenſible perceptions to purpoſes greatly a-

bove

bove what any other animal is capable of. They have feelings ſuch as we have; they have likewiſe ſomething of memory, by which they are capable of acquiring experience to a great degree; and many of them have a degree of natural ſagacity that is truly aſtoniſhing, to which we give the unmeaning name of *inſtinct*; and all we can ſay of it is, that it was given them by their Creator, in a manner we know no more of than we do of creation itſelf. With all the ſuperior powers and faculties that man can boaſt of, we muſt have ſaid the ſame of him; only with this difference, the fineneſs or coarſeneſs of their different conſtitutions, and the difference of their power and faucltics ariſing from theſe; I ſay we muſt have viewed man in the ſame light with the brute animals, with the difference that has been mentioned, if it had not been for the hints Moſes has given us, which, ſhort as they are, were they well underſtood, would lead us to a knowledge of ourſelves much ſuperior to what is commonly done. He mentions two circumſtances that merit particular attention, as they are of importance for man to know: beſides the ſolemnity that was uſed at the creation of man, he tells us, that man was made in the image of his Creator; and that God breathed into his noſtrils

trils the breath of life. I have ſaid there was a ſolemnity uſed at the creation of man; and it ought to be particularly attended to; it may be obſerved, that through the preceding days work of creation, it is ſaid, God did ſo and ſo: God created the heavens and the earth, God ſaid, Let there be light, and there was light &c. But when he came to the finiſhing the moſt dignified part of his creation, the creation of man, he ſaid, Let us make man in our image, after our likeneſs. There is a dignity and grandeur of ſentiment in the expreſſion that I am afraid is too much overlooked Man made after the image of God! how aſtoniſhing is this! how ought it to raiſe up the heart of man to thoſe worthy and exalted views of the divine character! his divine excellencies and perfections as he has graciouſly manifeſted himſelf to mankind, as are worthy of man to entertain. I would be underſtood to mean, ſuch views of God as would lead the heart to the ſupreme love of God and of all goodneſs; the pronoun *us* is plural, and plainly intimates a plurality of perſons in the divine Eſſence, in other words, (as we are more fully inſtructed afterwards in Revelation,) that there is a Trinity of Perſons, conſiſting of the Father, the Eternal Son and Holy Ghoſt, who have each their different offices in the

the great plan of the conſtitution of grace. This truth merits a particular attention, as it is of infinite conſequence for mankind to know.

If I have time and health, perhaps I may at ſome future period take more particular notice of the Unitarian ſyſtem: In the mean time, I only obſerve, it is a ſyſtem unworthy of human nature.

It has been obſerved, that, as Moſes informs us, man was made in the image of his Creator. There are two things well known in an image of any perſon or thing:—a likeneſs—and deſigned repreſentation of the original; and where there is no acceſs to the original, as in the preſent caſe there is not, it is then from the image we form our apprehenſions. This is ſo remarkably the caſe, that we, upon the ſtricteſt enquiry, will find that all our notions of the divine perfections, underſtanding, power, wiſdom, goodneſs, juſtice, &c. are taken from the ſhadows of them in ourſelves. Language is not capable of repreſenting theſe perfections as they exiſt in the Creator, in any other way but from the ideas or apprehenſions we have of them as they exiſt among men; with this difference only, that we aſcribe them to *Deity* in an infinite degree of per-

fection. It would be well for mankind, if it was remembered, that the moſt perfect man is but an image, and needs more adjuſting than the wiſeſt philoſopher is capable of making out. And, after all, let me obſerve, the divine underſtanding, power, wiſdom, juſtice, goodneſs, &c. are really different from what we call by theſe names, as they are found among men,—as almighty creating power is above that faint ſmall degree of them we enjoy.

I have obſerved, that the terms by which the divine perfections, and the exertion of them, are conceived, muſt be expreſſed in Language; we have no other medium by which we can either form any idea of them, or communicate our ideas to others. The analogy, however, between theſe perfections, as they exiſt in the Creator and are exerted by him, and as they exiſt in and are exerted by men,—is ſo remote, that it would be bad reaſoning to draw inferences from the ſimilarity.

A variety of conjectures and gueſſes have been made about this ſimilarity and likeneſs,—to ſay wherein it conſiſted. Some have imagined, that as the Creator is the ſovereign proprietor of heaven and earth, and has abſolute dominion over all his creatures, that therefore

therefore this ſimilarity or likeneſs in man to his Creator, lay in the dominion that was given him over the creatures. This will not do; nor is his likeneſs to his Creator to be accounted for in this manner; for we are expreſsly told by Moſes, that the dominion over the creatures was a dignity granted to Adam after he was completely made. We muſt therefore look for ſomething in his complete perfect creation ſtate, as he came out of his Creator's hands, for his image and likeneſs.

Others, perhaps with more propriety, place it in what is called his moral perfections, and think they have the apoſtles' authority for making it conſiſt in knowledge, righteouſneſs, and holineſs. This will not do either: Theſe are only the reſult of his conſtitution and perfect frame, but not his conſtitution and frame as he was created. We muſt therefore look for ſomething in his original frame and conſtitution, wherein to find this image or likeneſs. Moſes has told us, that his body was created out of the duſt, and the Creator breathed into his noſtrils the breath of life: This leads us to ſee, that we are not to look for that image either in the body or ſoul ſeparately, as they are commonly diſtinguiſhed, but in the whole man, as he was created, perfect. We accordingly

ingly find, that the terms made uſe of by the Creator, in his addreſſes to man, are taken from both the intellectual and bodily parts of man; and theſe are what complete the human frame and conſtitution.

The manner in which the Great Proprietor and Poſſeſſor of Life and Being ſubſiſts in the perfect enjoyment of all the powers of life, muſt be altogether unknown to us, as we know ſo little of our own; and it cannot be ſuppoſed that any, even the moſt perfect creature, the poſſeſſor only of a dependent being, can form any tolerable notion of the manner in which life and being exiſts in the Great Author and Communicator of Life and Being. To pretend to reaſon from our ſcanty meaſures of knowledge, to the perfection of knowledge in the Moſt High, muſt be weak, unfair, and fooliſh; and yet, as a trinity, in the moſt perfect and undivided unity of the Divine Eſſence, is every where aſſerted through the divine record, under the titles of Father, Son, and Spirit, it is reaſonable to expect there ſhould be ſome feint ſhadow of it in his image.

Thoſe who have given any degree of attention to the mechaniſm of the human frame, muſt have diſcovered there three ſyſtems, very

very different, and deſigned to anſwer quite different purpoſes, and yet all conſiſting of the ſame ſubſtance, perfectly united, ſubſiſting in and by one another;—the firſt for taking in and diſtributing proper food for ſubſiſtence; the ſecond, for bringing the objects we are concerned about under our obſervation; and the third, for exerting the animal powers, and bringing them into action.

But thoſe who look farther into the conſtitution, and view the whole man together, will find a ſtill more perfect trinity inlaid in his very frame. The foundation, and what may be called the root and ſpring of all, is laid in his life and being, with the powers belonging to it: The ſecond conſiſts of perceptive powers, by which our ſenſes are employed, and informations taken in for enabling us to carry our ſmall pittance of knowledge as far as it will go: The third conſiſts of active powers, by which we are enabled to accompliſh what the informations we take in by our perceptive powers diſcover to be proper and neceſſary for active conduct in life.

A ſlight attention to theſe views of theſe different powers in the human conſtitution, will lead us to ſee, that to the firſt of theſe, —the firſt animal ſyſtem I have mentioned, is

analogous; to the ſecond,—with regard to perceptive powers,—the ſecond; and to the third,—reſpecting active powers,—the third: And it is here, in the trinity of powers in the human conſtitution, that we are to look for what is to be underſtood by the ſignificant expreſſion—*Man was made in the image of his Creator.*

Whether this view of the human conſtitution will contribute any thing toward removing the difficulty we find in conceiving a trinity in the Divine Eſſence, may be conſidered by thoſe who have both ability and leiſure.

A queſtion ſtill remains, How man, made out of the duſt of the earth, came to poſſeſs all theſe amazing qualities? A philoſophical inveſtigation of this, would be tedious and difficult: The ſhort anſwer is, By the amazing power of his Creator. How creating power operates, we do not know; that is quite beyond the reach and extent of the human powers. Moſes has told us all that is neceſſary for us to know concerning it: He tells us, that after the body was made, the Creator breathed into his noſtrils the breath of life, and man became a living ſoul;—more properly a living frame; as the ſame word in that language is oftener uſed to denote the body than

than the ſpiritual part. But how the body was made, and how life was breathed into it, is known only to the Great Creator.

What I have mentioned with regard to the creation of man, is certainly intended to teach us ſomething about the human conſtitution. The word which our tranſlators render *life*, is plural in the original, and plainly leads us to a view of the communication of another life, different from the animal, and, perhaps, to a third life, as much above the rational as the rational is above the animal, by the indwelling and influence of the Spirit of Grace. What this life is, thoſe only can know who feel the divine power and influence of the Spirit of Grace upon their hearts, raiſing them up to a participation of that *life*, which he is now in the full poſſeſſion of, in the heavenly glory; for, let me obſerve, the perfection of the Chriſtian life conſiſts in a perfect likeneſs to the Son of God: I mean ſuch a likeneſs as human nature is capable of being raiſed up to, under the influence of the Divine Spirit.

The original word with regard to *Life*, will bear to be tranſlated, "He breathed into him, (or inſpired him with) the ſpirit of lives;" and by that Adam became a living man. This leads me to take notice of an expreſſion, as we find

it

it uſed in Job, "The inſpiration of the Almighty giveth underſtanding." And we are further told, that holy men of God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt. We have a remarkably ſtriking proof, and a ſenſible effect of this in the apoſtles on the day of Pentecoſt, which leads us as far into the myſtery of divine inſpiration as we are capable of forming any apprehenſions of: For, how the Holy Spirit works upon, and affects the hearts of men, we know nothing but by the effects which it produces.

Thus much, however, we may know, that the Creator can by his Spirit raiſe up whom he will, even the moſt ignorant, to ſuch meaſures of knowledge and underſtanding, and the perfections which depend upon them, he pleaſes; approaching more or leſs toward perfection, according to the different powers of mind he has given them in their original frame and conſtitution. We are told by an inſpired apoſtle, that he knew but in part: Perfect knowledge is not apportioned to man in this imperfect ſtate; it is reſerved for a more perfect ſtate of exiſtence, in the regions of perfect knowledge.

It may be ſaid with confidence, that every man who lives in the world is more or leſs inſpired

inſpired, becauſe that is the only way by which *life* can be conveyed and ſupported. Jeſus Chriſt, who, in prophetic language, is called the Sun of Righteouſneſs, the Light and the Life of the World, has the diſpenſing of this Spirit, and is ſaid to be the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. It will be underſtood, that every man who cometh into the world, is not ſavingly enlightened and brought to the knowledge of eternal life; but all that light and life that exiſts in the world, among men, is derived from him, and is the effect of that ſpirit which he hath purchaſed.

What meaſure of this ſpirit the firſt man had in his creation ſtate, we do not know, from the ſhort hints we have of his hiſtory in that ſtation; which, as we are taught to believe, was not long, yet ſeems to have continued longer than is commonly allowed. Several circumſtances which are mentioned during that period, lead us to think ſo; but this we may ſay with confidence, that he had as much of that ſpirit as was neceſſary for performing the duties of his ſtation: For it is worthy of obſervation, that the Righteous Creator lays no commands or duties upon his creatures, until he has placed them in ſuch

ſuch circumſtances that every duty ariſes naturally out of them.—The firſt man, our common father, found himſelf, at his firſt entrance upon life and being, in the happieſt ſituation that it was poſſible for ſuch a creature as man to be placed; with every thing that could contribute to the moſt perfect enjoyment of life, and all the neceſſary powers of life, to enable him to make the beſt uſe of them: he found himſelf at the head of the new creation. What are we to underſtand by this? The loweſt view we can take of it is, that he was the moſt dignified being in the creation; I ſpeak of the material creation. But happy as he was in theſe circumſtances, there was ſtill ſomething wanting to complete his happineſs.

Man is formed for ſociety; and of all others conjugal is the moſt endearing: He wanted a helpmate; one to ſhare with him in his happineſs and joy; and, allow me the expreſſion, to render his happineſs in that ſtate complete.

How long he continued in that happy ſtate, as has been already obſerved, we do not know; but, from that happy ſtate, the powers of which he was poſſeſſed to continue in that ſtate, we may take a hint toward the deciſion of

of that vexatious queſtion about liberty and neceſſity. Adam had perfect powers for enabling him to do the duties required of him in the ſtation in which he was placed. How then came he to fall from that ſtate? No neceſſity was laid upon him; he was at liberty to act right or wrong. No one can make the the leaſt doubt, that every man is at perfect liberty to act ſo far as his powers go; nor will it be denied, that man is ſo made as to be neceſſarily determined by the moſt prevalent motives. So far then as he has power to weigh and balance the ſeveral motives for or againſt any action, ſo far he is perfectly free; and where theſe powers are wanting or defective, ſo far he is and muſt be a ſlave to the prevailing power, and muſt of neceſſity act under its influence and direction. This is unhappily the caſe with multitudes of mankind, when ignorance or inattention gives ſuch advantage to the flattering affections and paſſions, as to make the moſt trifling gratification outweigh a crown of glory and eternal happineſs.

This was not—could not be—the caſe of the firſt man: His powers extended as far as his duty did, until the fatal trial came, the event of which involved him and all his poſterity in miſery and ruin. In this trial we cannot

not with propriety ſay his wiſdom failed, (for the apoſtle aſſures us he was not deceived); but his paſſion for his wife was ſo ſtrong, as determined him rather to be ruined with her than be ſeparated from her. This made him run into the danger with his eyes open, and perfectly free in all other reſpects.

Lord Kaimes, in his Eſſays on Morality and Natural Religion, has entered deeply into this ſubject; and, after his long and ingenious reaſoning, declares himſelf, with firmneſs, on the ſide of neceſſity. Man, according to him, is impelled by neceſſity to act the part he does in life; and that it is impoſſible for him to act otherwiſe.—I venerate the memory of Lord Kaimes, as a man of learning, refined taſte, and great abilities; but a ſtrict regard to truth obliges me to obſerve, that his ſyſtem on this ſubject deſtroys the foundation of virtue and goodneſs—of religion—among men. Where is the merit of acting a worthy part in life, if man is impelled to do ſo from neceſſity, and cannot act otherwiſe? Where is the demerit of acting an unworthy part in life, if the poor unhappy man is irreſiſtably impelled to act ſo from fatal neceſſity? That neceſſity equally leads us to both theſe principles of action; and therefore there is nothing virtuous

or

or praiſe-worthy in the one,—nothing culpable in the other.—Let me now aſk, What is the ſtate of mankind in this ſituation, when there is neither virtue nor vice in the world? I need not anſwer the queſtion, for it is obvious to every one. I have only to add, (for I mean not to follow him through his long intricate chain of reaſoning), it was unworthy of ſo great a man.

From a circumſtance which I have mentioned with regard to Adam's fatal trial, and the event of it to him and his poſterity, I am led to another conſideration, which, perhaps, is not ſo commonly attended to as its obviouſneſs requires: It is this, That notwithſtanding the perfection and happineſs of man's primeval ſtate in paradiſe, it was never deſigned to be the fixed and permanent ſtate of mankind, but to introduce that which was to be ſo, the conſtitution of grace, as it is eſtabliſhed in Jeſus Chriſt; as fully appears by the event; unleſs we can ſuppoſe the Creator ſo little acquainted with his own works as to find his purpoſes and views baffled at firſt ſetting out; and, as ſome have very unwarily repreſented him, neceſſitated, by this accident, to have recourſe to a new remedial law, which ſhould ſupply the defects, and thereby ſet aſide the old one, which perfect wiſdom had ſeen

ſit to eſtabliſh: in plain language, according to this plan, the Creator was forced, either to make himſelf a liar, or to deſtroy his favourite creature. Theſe are conſequences that ought not, muſt not follow, or ariſe from any plans or views of the divine government that is made by man. The laws of the Creator are not like thoſe of weak ſhort-ſighted man, which muſt be altered and amended as unforeſeen events caſt up to him; and may be diſpenſed with at his pleaſure. As the views of perfect wiſdom and underſtanding can have no bounds, the Creator knew perfectly well, long before creation exiſted, from eternity, the whole plan of connexions and events that were to take place in his creation, and had made ample proviſion for conducting them with perfect unerring wiſdom. Foreknown to God from the beginning are all his works. The aſtoniſhing power and wiſdom which the Creator hath manifeſted in creation, in the mechaniſm of nature and in his manner of conducting the moral world, is ſomething like what the apoſtle ſays of the plan of divine revelation; there is a height and depth, a breadth and length in them, that no created mind can fully comprehend or underſtand. Let it be further obſerved; the laws of the Creator are eternal and immutable

as

as the Creator himſelf; they cannot be altered or diſpenſed with. The Saviour of mankind has ſaid, Heaven and earth may paſs away, but my word ſhall not paſs away; nor one jot or tittle of the law ſhall in no ways paſs away till all be fulfilled. And how can the ſtability, the unalterable nature of the divine law be expreſſed in ſtronger terms? whatever plans, therefore, the wiſdom of man has formed for him, with regard to his moral government of the world, which ſuppoſe any the leaſt alteration, or, as ſome call it, diſpenſing with any part of his law, can have no foundation in truth. They muſt be falſe and erroneous, and a preſumptuous reflection on divine wiſdom, whoſe plan is ſo perfect and complete, that every ſtep makes way for another, till the whole deſign is completed; though many events, in the detached light wherein, from our limited powers and capacities, we view them, ſeem to have a quite contrary tendency, nothing can be more fooliſh and abſurd, than to ſuppoſe caſes which never did, nor could happen; unleſs it be the folly of making grave inferences from them. Such certainly is the enquiry; What would have been the caſe of the ſituation of our firſt parents and their poſterity, if they had continued to perſiſt in their primitive in-

tegrity? Man had no promiſe of any other life than what he was then in poſſeſſion of, nor even of the continuance of that, any further than was implied in the threatening, which aſſured him he ſhould die, whenever he ſhould eat of that fruit; but the threatening did not imply a promiſe, that if he did not eat of it he ſhould never die: He had therefore no aſſurance that the Creator would never reſume the life he had given him, if he ſaw it fit. In every point of light, therefore, in which we can poſſibly view their caſe, it muſt be at leaſt a very improper way of ſpeaking, to ſay that they were to *work* for life by the covenant they were then under; which can have no foundation, but on the precarious ſuppoſition, that when this ſtate of probation, as it is called, was finiſhed, they ſhould have been tranſplanted into a higher ſtate of dignity and happineſs, ſomething like that which mankind have now a grant of in Jeſus Chriſt.--And where is the foundation for this ſuppoſition in revelation? There is none. How this notion came to be ſo univerſal among mankind, is not eaſily to be accounted for; as there is no authority for it in the divine record. Inſtead of any proſpect of being raiſed up to a more dignified life, we find, upon the ſtricteſt enquiry, that the continuance of that life they were in poſſeſſion

of,

of, depended upon the will of the Creator: nor was man put upon *doing* of any kind. It is therefore with great impropriety, that the creation ſtate of man is termed a covenant of works; for beſides that a covenant ſuppoſes a kind of equality between the contracting parties, and there could be none between the Creator and the creature, he had nothing to do, but *forbearing* to eat of the fruit of a certain tree; and that was the only event in which he had reaſon to fear the death which was threatened. I leave it to thoſe who will have a covenant of *works*, to ſay what is to be underſtood by it.—I underſtand nothing from the term, becauſe I find no works required of man: I would rather conſider it as the ſtate in which the Creator was pleaſed to place his creature man, to enjoy life and happineſs on a ſimple term; that he ſhould not eat of the fruit of a certain tree in the garden where he was placed—Eaſier terms could not poſſibly be propoſed; for ſure if he could not do that, he could do nothing.

Of a piece with this plan of a covenant of works, and another part of it, is the conſtruction that is put upon the threatening; viz. that the death thus peremptorily threatened was not only the death of the body, an end

put to that life which he enjoyed, or the extinction of ſpiritual life in the ſoul, but extended alſo to eternal death; the very ſame which we find threatened againſt thoſe who do not believe the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt—It is truly amazing how this ſhould ever have come into any one's head without any authority or countenance from revelation. Adam had no promiſe of eternal life in his creation ſtate; he could not, therefore, be threatened with eternal death; it was only with the loſs of that life he was then in poſſeſſion of. How is it poſſible to view this matter in any other light? The Creator inſpired man with life, and the enjoyment of life and happineſs, on very eaſy terms: and, if he failed in obſerving the terms, he was to loſe that life, and that was all he could loſe; for he was poſſeſſed of no other. This merits a ſerious attention; and I leave it with the ſerious and thinking part of mankind to conſider.

It is not a little ſurpriſing, how any one could miſs to ſee what is the very obvious conſequence of this plan of a covenant of works, and the conſequences that are made to follow from it: It is this: That it muſt have been utterly impoſſible for any of mankind to be ſaved; as impoſſible as it was for the God of truth to lie, or any conſtitution or law of his to be ſet aſide until

until it had its full effect. The creation ſtate of man, and the ſtate he is brought into by the conſtitution of grace, have not been well underſtood by ſome who have wrote upon them: This has forced the aſſerters of the ſyſtem I have mentioned, into ſuch a maze of intricacy in their reaſoning, as requires much more metaphyſical ſkill to comprehend their meaning, than falls to every man's ſhare—It would be happy for mankind, if the great plan of divine providence reſpecting man was better underſtood, and more ſeriouſly attended to, than it is. It is far from my intention, by any thing I have ſaid, to extenuate the demerit of ſin, which, in its very nature, is the death of the man. But the queſtion is not, What puniſhment ſin deſerves? but, what puniſhment the Creator had decreed and threatened upon the firſt man's tranſgreſſion? an event which he certainly foreſaw would happen, and, in a very ſhort time, known perfectly well to himſelf.—The account we have in the record, is plain and ſimple, obvious to every one's underſtanding; yet plain and ſimple as it is, it has been twiſted and dragged in, to anſwer purpoſes and views which the Creator never intended. The obvious meaning of the threatening appears to be, that man ſhould loſe, or which, perhaps,

perhaps, would be expreſſing it as properly, that an end ſhould be put to all that life he then enjoyed; but does not ſay how the Creator meant to diſpoſe of him afterwards; whether to leave him there, or to raiſe him up again to another life, and a new way of living. This, the threatening denounced, peremptory as it was, is left entirely in his own hand.—That eternal life which is brought to light by the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, the hope and proſpect of which is ſet before us in him, is altogether different from the life man could have any proſpect of in his creation ſtate, even though he had perſiſted in innocence; the puniſhment, therefore, of both, if forfeited, will, by the righteous Judge of all the earth, be proportioned to the forfeiture of the one and the rejection of the other. The firſt grant of life to man, we know, was forfeited and loſt, irrecoverably loſt, and we have ſeen the puniſhment threatened, and executed upon the forfeiture. The new grant of life was made to Jeſus Chriſt, who is the great head and diſpenſer of it; and the puniſhment threatened for rejecting it, as we are informed by his goſpel, is *eternal death*. The truth is, we are aſſured by the divine record, that the Creator had then, I mean upon the firſt tranſgreſſion, provided another head

for

for mankind, for raiſing them up, and conveying to them eternal life in his bleſſed ſon, that divine perſon afterwards known in the world by the name of *Jeſus Chriſt*; of whom Adam in paradiſe was only a figure, or a ſort of ſenſible image and repreſentation, for helping us with greater eaſe to form proper apprehenſions of him in that character, as the head of the new creation of God. Did we know what life is, and could we talk intelligibly upon it, we would ſee how exactly the threatening is fulfilled. But though we do not know what life is, yet there are two kinds of *Being* which we have ſome knowledge of, viz. the animal and the vegetable, where we can perceive how life is ſupported and maintained; that is by their connexion with the material ſyſtem, and the influences of the heavens. Whenever the ſap is no more raiſed in vegetables, they die; the vegetable life is gone; and when the animal can no longer breathe, it is then dead; dead to all the purpoſes of a preſent life, as it can no longer perform them—In either caſe, though not an atom of their ſubſtances is annihilated, yet they are dead; there is an end put to that ſtate which we call *life*. We have, I do not know how, got a ſtrange notion, that ſpirits cannot die: Life and exiſtence are different things.

things. It may be true, that ſpirits cannot die, as bodies do, by a diſſolution of parts; yet, if the life of ſpirits lie in their connexion with a ſpiritual ſyſtem, I might have ſaid, with the father of ſpirits, which is certainly the caſe, or they muſt be ſelf-exiſtent and independent beings; whenever that connexion is broken, there muſt be an end put to what we call their life, and they are made incapable of that way of living, which the connexion I have mentioned qualified them for.

It would be to little purpoſe to look for any other ſpiritual ſyſtem but that which we have in the fullneſs and all-ſufficiency of the Creator, as he has graciouſly manifeſted himſelf to men, in that diſpenſation of grace he has made in his bleſſed Son. And if the ſpiritual life is maintained by the Divine Spirit, as the animal life is by that ſpirit which animates it, connected with matter, as it certainly is; for the one is a figure of the other; whenever that ſpirit—the ſpirit of life—is withdrawn from man, there is an end of his life and vital powers: His connexion with the ſpiritual ſyſtem is broken; and the man is dead to all the purpoſes of the ſpiritual life,—as much ſo, as if one of us were totally diveſted of his rational powers, and ſunk down to a mere animal brute

brute ſtate. The animal might continue to exiſt; but we would all ſay, the *man* is dead.

Perhaps great fault may be found with the repreſentation I have given of the creation ſtate of man, as connected with his Creator, by philoſophical divines, and patrons of moral government: Perhaps they may ſay, this gives us a horrible and unworthy view of the Creator, the Sovereign of the Univerſe. Where is the juſtice, it may be ſaid (to ſay nothing of goodneſs), to require ſuch duties of the creature as he has not given him powers to perform? Let me aſk, how is it inſtructed, that God required any ſuch duties, either of Adam or his children? It cannot be inſtructed; becauſe ſuch duties were never required. We muſt certainly take the divine law preciſely as the Creator has given it in the record. There we find no duties required of Adam, but what he had ſufficient powers given him to perform; we find none required of his mere children, by which I mean ſuch as have no other life but that which they derive from him; but that they deny themſelves, take up their croſs, and follow Chriſt; and this is no more than acknowledging themſelves to be what they really are, fallen creatures,—and very

ſoon

ſoon to be dead to the world and all connection with it, and riſing up, by the influence of the Spirit of Grace, to that life which the gracious Creator has prepared for them in his bleſſed Son, where they are aſſured of finding an infinitely better life than ever they could have had from Adam, even in his moſt perfect ſtate, and of being more cloſely united to the fountain of life, by his connection with the Son of God in human nature; in virtue of which, all God's commandments are ſo far from being grievous, that they are all pleaſantneſs and peace. For the truth of this, we have the authority of an inſpired writer,—"Wiſdom's ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and "all her paths are peace;" hence the love of God, ſhed abroad in the heart, writes all his commands there deep and ſtrong. They are are all comprehended in the one great law of *love*.

When Adam fell from his original ſtate of innocence, by turning away from the Creator to the creature, and expected all that happineſs from the creature, that was to be found in God only; he forſook the fountain of life—the only way in which a ſpirit can live. But they carry the Hebrew phraſe too far, who make it import any more than the certainty of

of the event—*death*, without ſpecifying the time when it ſhould be inflicted. From the moment of the firſt tranſgreſſion, it was appointed for all men once to die; and thus it becomes every one's duty to acquieſce in the ſentence pronounced by the Great Judge of Heaven and earth, who beſt underſtood his own deed. Perhaps it may be ſaid, Why ſhould the beneficent Creator be ſo cruel as to give his favourite creature—man, ſuch a tranſient glance of happineſs as could only ſerve to condemn him and his poſterity to endleſs regret for the loſs of it? Why put the fortunes of all mankind in one man's hand,—and why puniſh them for a crime they neither were nor could be conſcious of, far leſs acceſſary to?

With theſe, and a number of ſuch queſtions, men who would be thought very wiſe have puzzled themſelves and others. It is really ſurpriſing how ſuch weak creatures, as even the wiſeſt and moſt learned of mankind are, ſhould ever have arrived at ſuch a degree of inſolence as to put queſtions to their Creator. This would be as abſurd as if the clay ſhould ſay to the potter, Why haſt thou made me thus? There can be no claim upon the Creator; we are his creatures, and he has an

abſolute right to diſpoſe of us as he pleaſes. It is an unqueſtionable truth, that the preſent ſtate, whatever it be, is that which the Creator has allotted to this order of his creatures; and had none of them ever been in any higher or better ſtate, who could have had any reaſon to complain? It is true, many men of great piety and learning have declared it inconſiſtent with the divine perfections, and therefore impoſſible, that ſuch an imperfect creature could have come out of the Creator's hands. But—when they are put upon anſwering a very natural queſtion, how came ſuch a creature there?—no wonder they are greatly embarraſſed, and embarraſſed they muſt be, when they are forced to reply, That God could not hinder or prevent our firſt parents from falling, without breaking in upon that liberty which they ſay was abſolutely neceſſary for a free agent, in a ſtate of probation, to enjoy. This is ſtrange reaſoning: What hurt could it have done to the liberty of our firſt parents, to have given them as much wiſdom as to enable them to counte.balance the temptation?

This ſame ſtate of probation, as it is called, it were much to be wiſhed, were better explained, and better underſtood than we commonly find it. What are we to underſtand by a ſtate

a ſtate of probation? The notion mankind in general have of it, that the Creator has treated his creatures as kings do their ſubjects when they are put upon their good behaviour, is certainly wrong: This is not the light in which we ought to view it. What demand can a creature have on the Creator? None; for he can make and place them in ſuch circumſtances as he pleaſes.

The Omniſcient Creator knew perfectly well what would be the event, and needed not to be put to the trial; and we are very ſure perfect wiſdom does nothing in vain. But probation in another light was very proper; that is, that the creature ſhould know itſelf, and its dependence on the Creator; to know how impoſſible it is, even for the moſt perfect creature to ſubſiſt in the moſt perfect enjoyment of life, in any other way than by mere grace, and the free unmerited exertion of Divine Power, for ſupporting it in that condition.

Greater advantages cannot be imagined than our firſt parents enjoyed; nor eaſier terms propoſed by the Creator for their enjoyment of perfect happineſs.

Hence ariſes a very inſtructive leſſon, of great importance and uſe to man,—that ſuch an ineſtimable treaſure as *life* could not be

ſafely truſted in the hand of any mere man. This is a truth which merits a very ſerious attention, as it is in effect the only mean of raiſing up the human mind to thoſe exalted views of the unſpeakable goodneſs and indulgent care of the Creator, which the human heart ought to entertain, and feel in the warmeſt manner, for his having lodged life—eternal life—in a hand where it could not poſſibly be forfeited or loſt,—in the hand of his own bleſſed Son: There it is lodged firm and ſecure, and from whom it is derived by all who believe in him.

This opens up a reaſon for introducing the permanent ſtate of mankind in the manner that has been already mentioned; that is, in order to give us a figure or image, by which we might be enabled to form ſome proper conceptions of *Him* who ſtands at the head of the new creation, as Adam did at the head of the old. Perhaps my view may be as clearly expreſſed, by ſaying, that Jeſus Chriſt ſtands at the head of mankind, in relation to the ſpiritual and eternal world, as Adam ſtood at the head of mankind, in relation to this preſent world.

Adam was intruſted with all that life which was ever to be conveyed to his natural deſcendants;

ſcendants; and through him it will be derived to the lateſt poſterity, in the courſe of what we call *natural generation*.

To him the terms of life were given, I mean the terms of the firſt grant of life that was made to man; by his failure in the obſervance of them, the fate of all his poſterity was unalterably determined by the judgment which the Creator paſſed upon his fall. The ſtate which this event brought mankind into, is evidently ſuch, that none of mankind could have any hope of eternal life by any other means than the free grace of the Creator, who can, and who alone can, raiſe human nature to the higheſt degree of perfection and happineſs it is capable of being raiſed up to, by the influence of his Spirit and grace. Much might be ſaid on this view of human nature; but the bounds allotted for this Eſſay will not allow me to enlarge on this part of the ſubject.

This leads to another conſideration of conſiderable importance. Had man never known any higher and happier ſtate than the preſent, he would naturally have reſted in this ſtate, as the ſtation the Creator had aſſigned him in his creation; but the account we have of the original ſtate of man in paradiſe, while it cauſeth us to regret the loſs we think we have

ſuſtained, yet has a natural tendency to open the heart for relief. In the earthly paradiſe, we have ſuch a fair view of the heavenly paradiſe, that many have been led into a very miſtaken notion; *viz.* That we have nothing more to expect from Jeſus Chriſt but a reſtoration of what we loſt by Adam.

The account Moſes has given us of the ſeduction on which the original tranſgreſſion was founded, has occaſioned a great profuſion of looſe wit, by ſuppoſing it ſuch a trifling circumſtance for entailing miſery on the whole human race, that Eve ſhould eat an apple. This wit might all have been ſpared, had the narrative, and the circumſtances in which it was written, been conſidered with any degree of attention.

Eve's character is marked with a great deal of honeſt, unſuſpecting ſimplicity; and every one will readily allow, that the temptation was conducted with the utmoſt ſtretch—the higheſt degree of ſubtilty. The ſubtilty of the ſerpent, we find marked by a greater than Moſes,—by the Great Saviour of Mankind, and is emphatically ſtiled, The *Old Serpent*—the tempter. Eve's finding the ſerpent buſy about the fruit, its ſpeaking and reaſoning gave great colour to the temptation; for how could

could ſhe reſiſt the ſtriking evidences the tempter gave of the great advantage the eating of that fruit would be attended with to her huſband and her? The only fault that can be found in the narration of this important event, is its conciſeneſs; but it is highly probable, the whole was then ſo well known by tradition, and was afterwards more fully explained to after ages, that there was no neceſſity for being more particular.

While I am upon this part of the ſubject, let me farther obſerve, that however currently the title of the *Grand Apoſtacy* is by moſt men affixed to the fall of our firſt parents, yet I never find it applied ſo in the whole courſe of divine revelation: There it is always applied to denote man's falling off from that ſtate the Creator graciouſly entered them into, by the conſtitution of Grace, when they were driven out of the earthly paradiſe.

The immediate conſequences of that firſt tranſgreſſion, the horror and anguiſh of mind which our firſt parents muſt have felt, after the hurry of the temptation was over, cannot poſſibly be imagined, much leſs deſcribed, by any being who has not had the experiment of the pleaſure and delight which they enjoyed in the intercourſe of friendſhip with their Creator.

tor. An honeſt mind, wheedled into an act of rebellion againſt a moſt gracious ſovereign, to whoſe friendſhip he owed the enjoyment of the moſt perfect earthly happineſs, and who had, at the ſame time, a numerous, beloved family, depending upon him by the ſupport he had from his ſovereign, all reduced to beggary, and all the miſeries conſequent upon it: The remorſe and anguiſh that ſuch a perſon muſt feel, may give ſome faint image of the ſtate of mind our firſt father muſt have been in, upon the firſt tranſgreſſion; but this repreſentation, ſtriking as it may appear, is as much fainter than that of our firſt parents, as there is no ſovereign equal to the Creator for worth, and none who can ſhow ſuch friendſhip, and confer ſuch favours as he had done. What then muſt they have felt, now that all this happineſs was loſt, and, ſo far as they could judge, irretrievably loſt.

I ſay, irretrievably loſt; for in this light it muſt have appeared to them. The law was expreſs, without any limitation; and even if juſtice ſhould be ſoftened and mellowed down to mercy, ſtill the truth of God who cannot lie, bound the criminals to ſuffer what he had poſitively ſaid ſhould be the puniſhment of their

their tranſgreſſion. No law of God can be ſet aſide, till it have its full effect.

There was no room left for transferring guilt, or for any vicarious puniſhment, and yet leſs, if poſſible, for fulfilling the law by a ſubſtitute or ſurety. The reaſon of this is perfectly juſt: The law which brought them under death, was of ſuch a nature, that it could never be fulfilled at all, when once it was broken. It is to be obſerved, that it was not upon perfect obedience to the whole will of God, but upon obedience to that particular command, to forbear eating of the forbidden fruit, that their life or death was made to depend.

It is indeed very probable, if they had kept that one command, it would have led them to obey the whole will of God; but as this was broken, they could obey it in no one inſtance: There was therefore no hope for the offenders but one, which no creature could entertain the moſt diſtant proſpect of; *viz.* That the Creator ſhould, by an act of free ſovereign grace, raiſe them from the dead; that is, create them anew, and enter them upon a new life, and a new way of living, ſuitable to the nature and deſign of that ſtate into which they ſhould be entered. This we find hath been done,

done, to the aſtoniſhment of the human race, in Jeſus Chriſt, the Mediator.

Accordingly, their caſe, as repreſented by Moſes, appears a diſmal reverſe of their former ſtate. The voice of their Creator, which uſed to fill them with pleaſure and joy unſpeakable, now filled them with the utmoſt terror; and all the poor relief they had, was to keep themſelves out of his ſight. Conſcious of their crime, they were afraid to ſee him; and, had he left them there, diſmal indeed muſt have been their ſituation;—had he not, in the moſt aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion and goodneſs, ſought them, they would for ever have been cut off from him who is the fountain of life, and would have been to all intents and purpoſes, but thoſe of the poor animal life, reduced to live as the beaſts of the field do, merely on this outward ſenſible world, and the low pleaſures and gratifications it can afford. And indeed that is all that any of their poſterity are capable of, until they are created anew in Chriſt Jeſus.

However we, their thoughtleſs poſterity, who know no better, may pleaſe ourſelves with theſe low gratifications, it muſt have been impoſſible for *them*, who had known ſuch ſuperior happineſs, to have ſubſiſted in the circumſtances

circumſtances in which they then found themſelves. Accordingly, their merciful Creator did not leave them long in this diſmal uncertainty: He immediately called them into judgment; and what was to be in all time coming the permanent ſtate of mankind, was then unalterably fixed by the great ſovereign; and in the ſentence pronounced upon the ſerpent, which is well known, we have the firſt opening of the diſpenſation of grace to men. And as the ſentence of death is literally fulfilled in all the deſcendants of Adam, that alone carries along with it a ſtrong confirmation of the bruiſing the ſerpent's head, as mentioned in the ſentence, or, as the Apoſtle John explains it, deſtroying the works of the Devil, *viz.* ſin and death; and, conſequently, of the bringing in of a new and unperiſhable life to man, in which the moſt aſtoniſhing diſplays of divine mercy and grace are manifeſted, that ever was ſet before any order of created beings;—ſuch as ought to raiſe up the human heart to thoſe worthy and exalted views of God, as he has manifeſted himſelf to mankind in his bleſſed Son, by whom this new life is purchaſed, and communicated to men by his bleſſed Spirit: To ſuch views as theſe, I repeat it, all will lead the heart to the ſupreme

love

love of God in Chriſt Jeſus,—the love and the practice of all goodneſs.

In conſequence of this new life, into which we are introduced by Jeſus Chriſt, the notions of the divine placability, of immortality, and of life after the body is diſſolved to duſt, have obtained in all ages and nations of the world, which never could have entered the heart of man in any other way but by revelation.

It has been often urged, that as theſe notions have obtained among nations that never had revelation, therefore they are natural to the human mind: I mean not to enter into the diſpute here; if I could, I think I would be able to ſupport myſelf, but it would lead me too far out of my way. I only ſay, whatever notions of that kind have obtained, in whatever nation of the world, have originated from revelation.

LETTERS,

LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND,

ON

THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF

LEARNING AND PHILOSOPHY.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

To Mr ———

Dear Sir,

You do me honour, in ſoliciting a ſtated and regular correſpondence with me; I cheerfully agree to your friendly propoſal, from which I promiſe myſelf a very ſenſible pleaſure: A correſpondence with one of your nice diſcernment and juſt taſte, will, I am confident, add conſiderably to my ſtock of knowledge, eſpecially as the ſubjects you mention are highly intereſting and important. But allow me, my dear friend, to obſerve, that high and extenſive meaſures of knowledge are not apportioned to man here; the buſineſs of our preſent ſtate is rather, as we are told by an elegant writer, to act, than to know. All the knowledge, that even the moſt enlightened, thoſe who have made the greateſt advances in human ſcience, are poſſeſſed of,

when compared with what ſtill remains to be known, ſcarce deſerves the name of knowledge. After all our reſearches, and laboured inveſtigations in the purſuit of knowledge, we only make diſcoveries of our own ignorance, and are taught to know how little we are capable of knowing: That degree of it which I have now in my eye, is reſerved for a fund of everlaſting entertainment, and ſtill higher degrees of improvement, in the regions of perfect knowledge, where we ſhall know even as we are known. But I have almoſt forgot what I chiefly intended in this letter. Notwithſtanding the low meaſures of knowledge we are capable of acquiring in our preſent ſtate; yet it is an important truth, however little attended to, that we are now in a ſtate of moral trial, with regard to the improvement of our minds in knowledge as well as in virtue. Perhaps it will be ſaid, as I know many think, that we are accountable only for ſuch meaſures of knowledge as God and nature have given us, and that, therefore, ignorance does not conſtitute a crime. This is falſe reaſoning: Ignorance, indeed, in ſome caſes, may not be criminal, where the means of acquiring knowledge are not given. But where the means of acquiring knowledge, and of improving the mind are given, they are highly culpable who neglect

to

to make the proper uſe of them: I mean not that every one who have theſe means can equally improve by them in the acquiſition of knowledge, or mental accompliſhments. There is a vaſt variety in the different organizations of the human frame; and upon theſe will in a great meaſure depend the different degrees of improvement, and conſequently the different degrees of knowledge that are acquired by the uſe; I will even ſay, the proper uſe of theſe means,—I will not enter upon the abſtract queſtion, whether all minds are originally alike intelligent or not? Perhaps they are; I have long thought ſo, and have therefore no other way of accounting for that diverſity of genius, the variety and difference of the powers of the human mind, that we find among mankind, but from the different modifications of mind and matter, as they are intimately connected in the human frame, and the different degrees of application to the uſe of theſe means, that are given us for acquiring knowledge.

Man, we know, is a compound being, compounded of matter and ſpirit; by the one, he is connected with or allied to the material, by the other, to the immaterial or ſpiritual world. The intimate connection of theſe conſtituent parts of the human frame, is acknowledged by

all; but the point of union, and the manner in which they operate upon one another, has never been, and perhaps never will be aſcertained: Our ignorance of this ſhould lead us to be more modeſt in our determinations about truths of infinite importance, which do not fall within the province of human reaſon to account for. The ſubjects you have propoſed for our correſpondence, are philoſophy and theology: I am not a good philoſopher, but I hope to make ſome improvement in that ſcience, from the correſpondence which you, from your partiality to your friend, have propoſed. I have given ſome attention to theology, and perhaps may be led to lay before you, upon that ſubject, ſome things that are out of the common line or tract of thinking among men: But do not therefore condemn them without a fair and candid examination.

I will not be ſhackled in the trammels of authorities, however great or reſpectable; I revere merit wherever it is to be found, but muſt at the ſame time think for myſelf. I only wiſh I may be able to ſupport the correſpondence with that dignity of ſentiment, which the importance of the ſubjects requires. I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,

AGREEABLE to your requeſt, and as I know philoſophy is a favourite ſtudy of yours, I have been endeavouring to rub up the little philoſophy I maſter of, in order to give you as diſtinct an account of it as I can. I will divide this into two branches: The knowledge of nature, and the philoſophy of the human mind. I begin with natural philoſophy, or the knowledge of the ſyſtem of nature, of which I propoſe only to take a general view. The moſt advantageous way of doing this, I believe will be, to conſider the origin and progreſs of philoſophy, the advantages to mankind ariſing from the ſtudy of it, and the manner in which our enquiries ought to be conducted, in order to obtain theſe advantages. This opens a large extenſive field of enquiry, and I am much afraid of myſelf, with regard to the execution of the plan I have propoſed. I will confine myſelf however, as I have already ſaid, to a general view, without entering minutely into particulars. To deſcribe the phænomena of nature, to explain their cauſes; to trace the relations and dependences

dependences of theſe cauſes; and to enquire into the whole conſtitution of the univerſe, is the buſineſs of natural philoſophy. With regard to its origin and progreſs, it may, I think, in general, be affirmed, that a ſtrong degree of curioſity, natural to the mind of man, has prompted mankind in all ages to ſtudy *nature*, the moſt delightful, the moſt inſtructive, and, of all others, the moſt entertaining that can engage the attention of the human mind: Every uſeful art has ſome connection with this ſcience; and the unexhauſted beauty and variety of objects throughout the univerſe, makes it ever agreeable, new and ſurpriſing.

In the hiſtory of learning, however, like all other hiſtories, we find the beginnings of it very uncertain, and much obſcured with fables.—Setting aſide the Moſaic account of the creation and formation of the univerſe, which has by ſome been conſidered as unphiloſophical, though I much doubt without any good reaſon, it is ſeveral ages, and not till mankind had made conſiderable advances in civilization and refinement, before we meet with any certain traces from hiſtory, of learning and philoſophy in the world.

As I have mentioned the Moſaic account of the creation, I cannot paſs it over without obſerving, that the degree of attention which it merits,

merits, has not been given to it by philoſophers and learned men. I know it is a received opinion, that it is not the deſign of revelation to give us a ſyſtem of philoſophy, but to inſtruct us in the knowledge of theſe things that more immediately concern our eternal intereſt in a future world. I will not at preſent enter upon a full diſcuſſion of this ſubject; perhaps I may have occaſion afterwards to give my reaſons for differing in opinion from philoſophers, who think the Moſaic account of the creation is not ſtrictly philoſophical. In the mean time I only obſerve, that philoſophy and theology are more intimately connected than is commonly apprehended. The creation is the ground work of revelation; and revelation gives an expreſſive language to the ſyſtem of nature. We can make nothing of revelation without the *creation*; and we can make nothing of the creation without revelation. I ſhall take more particular notice of this in its proper place:—This is a digreſſion which I hope you will pardon. I now return to the ſtate in which we left philoſophy. The firſt philoſophers that merit any attention, were, as we collect from ſeveral undoubted teſtimonies, thoſe of *Phœnicia* and *Greece*. At what æra of the world theſe appeared, I do not now recollect.—They made a vacuum, atoms, and

and the gravity of atoms, the firſt principles of their philoſophy. This doctrine, according to Strabo, and ſome other hiſtorians, is more ancient than the times of the Trojan war: Whether it was ſuggeſted to them from their early obſervation of nature, before its plain and ſimple appearances were obſcured by the viſionary ſchemes and diſputes of ſpeculative men, or was derived from ſome other ſource, is uncertain.

Thus much, however, we know, that, for a long time, ſome traces of thoſe ancient principles are to be found amongſt the doctrines of ſucceeding philoſophers, though interwoven with their own particular tenets; but what appears moſt uniform in the variety of their opinions, ſeems to be derived from this ſource.—I ſhall write you more fully on this ſubject in my next: in the mean time, I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER III.

DEAR SIR,

IN my laſt I juſt mentioned the firſt philoſophers that we have any account of from ancient hiſtory, who merit any attention, and took notice of the leading principles of their philoſophy. It would afford but little entertainment, and would ſcarce recompence the trouble of a peruſal, to mention the different ſects of philoſophers that afterwards appeared; their diviſions and ſubdiviſions, into ſtill more numerous ſects,—the variety of doctrines and opinions they endeavoured to eſtabliſh,—how each overthrew what his predeceſſor had advanced, and was himſelf treated in the ſame manner by his ſucceſſor. This was peculiarly the caſe in the Ionic ſchool; where, from the imperfect accounts handed down to us, we are told, that one made *water* the firſt principle of all things; another choſe *air*; a third *fire*; a fourth preferred *earth*; and ſome took them all in, and made theſe four the elements or firſt principles of all things: ſo early did the paſſion for ſyſtems begin, and diſputes in conſequence of ſuch precipitancy was unavoidable. Oppoſition to each other,

other, ſeems to have driven them to extremes; and all of them aimed at too general and extenſive principles. The diviſions, diſputes, and variety of opinions that prevailed among the antient philoſophers, are ſo ſimilar to thoſe of modern and more enlightened times, that I hope you will not think it improper to trace a little the ſimilarity.—One ſet of the atomiſts retained paſſive, inert matter only; and from the fortuitous concourſe of its atoms, pretended to account for, and explain every thing reſpecting the formation of the univerſe, and the whole phœnomena of nature. Another ſect, more refined, aſcribed reality and permanency to active incorporeal ſubſtances only;---a third ſort ſeem to have rejected the reality of both, while they maintained that there was no ſtability of eſſence or knowledge any where to be found; that all *being* and *knowledge* was fantaſtical and relative only; and that *man* was the meaſure of truth to himſelf, in every thing reſpecting true or falſe, right and wrong. Indulge me, my dear Sir, in pointing out the ſimilarity between the claſſes of philoſophers I have mentioned, and thoſe of modern times.

One claſs of our philoſophers have retained only the primary qualities of bodies, and have diſcarded the ſecondary qualities, as having no real foundation

foundation or exiſtence in nature. I mean not to ſay, that the philoſophers of this claſs pretended to account for the formation of the univerſe from the fortuitous concourſe of atoms, as the firſt claſs mentioned among the *atomiſts* did. Still, however, the reſemblance is ſtriking and obvious, as both retained only in their account of matter, the paſſive inert qualities, or thoſe which are called primary qualities.

In modern times, another claſs of philoſophers have refined and improved upon the principles of thoſe now mentioned:—They have gone one ſtep farther, but it is a great one. The firſt claſs I mentioned, refuſed all the ſecondary qualities of bodies, and retained the primary qualities of matter only. The ſecond claſs among the moderns, have diſcarded all the primary qualities of bodies, and turned matter out of the world, leaving us nothing but ſpirit and ideas, or matter exiſting only in idea. Hence, like the ſecond claſs amongſt the ancients, they have aſcribed reality and permanency of exiſtence to active, incorporeal or ſpiritual ſubſtances only. A third claſs of moderns, in imitation of the ancients, have rejected the reality of both. Not ſatisfied with the ravages of their predeceſſors, in deſtroying firſt the ſecondary, and then the primary qualities of matter, they have gone ſtill

farther, and with, an unequalled boldneſs of fancy and imagination, have rejected the exiſtence of ſpirit, as well as matter, and left us nothing but vague, uncertain, fantaſtical ideas to be the meaſure and teſt of every thing reſpecting man, both in his preſent and future period of exiſtence. How nearly theſe modern ſceptics agree in ſentiment with thoſe among the ancients, the third claſs I mentioned, any one may ſatisfy himſelf, by even ſlightly examining, and comparing the leading principles of both. I need ſcarcely obſerve to you, that the leaders of theſe ſects of philoſophers amongſt the moderns are, Mr Locke, Dr Berkley, and David Hume. This is a digreſſion which I could not eaſily avoid, in comparing the ancient and modern ſtate of philoſophy.—I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

DEAR SIR,

I NOW return, after the digreſſion in my laſt, to the ſtate in which I left philoſophy among the ancients. The paſſion for ſyſtematizing had then begun, and numberleſs diſputes and contradictory opinions were the unavoidable conſequence. Philoſophers themſelves were bewildered; truth was loſt, and true knowledge and philoſophy baniſhed from the ſchools. I am ſorry to give you this diſagreeable picture of the ſtate of learning, but you know it is juſt; and therefore, in tracing the hiſtory of learning, is not to be overlooked.

In the time of this uncertainty amongſt the philoſophers, *Socrates* appeared in the world: A ſublimity of genius, a ſimplicity of manners, a particular talent for inveſtigating truth, and expoſing error, peculiarly diſtinguiſhed this great man. In his youth he applied himſelf, as his predeceſſors had done, to the ſtudy of the knowledge of nature, and endeavoured to reduce it to method and principles; but finding ſo little ſatisfaction from the ſtricteſt examination of their ſyſtems, he was too ſincere a lover of truth, and too juſt to mankind, to attempt inventing

one of his own, or to diſſemble his ignorance of nature.

Imaginary knowledge he conſidered as the greateſt obſtruction to true ſcience, and made thoſe who were poſſeſſed of it very troubleſome to the lovers of ſolid learning. He therefore took every opportunity of expoſing it, and had a happy talent in ridiculing the vanity of the Sophiſts, who pretended to know every thing: One circumſtance in the hiſtory of his life, is not to be omitted. The oracle, on a certain occaſion, had pronounced him the wiſeſt of men; and this preference he explained with his uſual modeſty, that it was owing to this only, that while others vainly imagined they knew what they were indeed ignorant of, he knew this one thing more than they—that he knew nothing. After many fruitleſs enquiries into the ſyſtem of nature, with a view to know the cauſes of her operations, he was at laſt ſatisfied, that it was better to reſt contented with the general view of nature, open to all, than to adopt any of the ſyſtems of his predeceſſors, from which, after all his reſearches, he had found himſelf ſo much diſappointed; he therefore abandoned them all, and applied himſelf to the ſtudy, and to promote the practice, as well as eſtabliſh the theory of moral philoſophy amongſt his fellow citizens;

citizens; and by his example and precepts merited the eſteem and admiration of mankind. I need not inform you of the end of this great and good man: perhaps he approached the neareſt to the truths of divine revelation, of any of the ancient philoſophers.

The ſtudy of nature, however, ſtill continued to engage the attention of the learned and the wiſe. *Plato* and his followers, ſenſible of the influence which the knowledge of nature muſt have on the moſt important truths, returned toit. The beauty of the univerſe was the favourite topic of the Platoniſts; inſomuch that they uſed to recommend the practice of virtue from the contemplation of its regular and conſtant motions, and the imitation of it as the beſt means for recovering their ancient conformity with it in a prior ſtate, and to become worthy of returning to the ſame ſtate again.

The atomical philoſophers reſolved all things into the motions and modifications of matter. But Plato ſtrove to raiſe the minds of men above the objects of ſenſe, and zealouſly maintained the pre-eminence of active, incorporeal, and intellectual beings; theſe, according to him, were the true ſubſtances; all others were ſhadows only: His ſyſtem of philoſophy was extremely beautiful and pleaſing in idea; but had the miſ-

fortune, like ſome others of later times, to be much above human nature, and calculated rather for a ſuperior order of beings than for men. If, however, he carried his fondneſs for his ideal philoſophy too far, it muſt at the ſame time be owned, that he at leaſt erred on the moſt innocent ſide of the queſtion, in oppoſition to the dangerous doctrines of Democritus, and ſome others of the atomical philoſophers.

But however laudable the views of this amiable philoſopher were, yet the unintelligible, myſtical doctrines of ſome of the later Platoniſts, ought ſurely to admoniſh us to be upon our guard againſt exceſſes even in a good cauſe.

In my next, I ſhall have occaſion to mention Pythagoras, who was at the utmoſt pains to enquire into the true ſyſtem of nature.—In the meantime, I am, Dear Sir, your's ſincerely.

LETTER

LETTER V.

DEAR SIR,

IN my laſt I promiſed to take ſome notice of Pythagoras, and, in an inveſtigation of this kind, it would be unpardonable not to take particular notice of him, who, as he was a man of extraordinary qualities, and was at the utmoſt pains to diſcover the true ſyſtem of the univerſe, he was likewiſe the moſt ſucceſsful of any of the ancients, in his enquiries concerning philoſophy, and the true ſyſtem of nature. Egypt was then the moſt celebrated ſeat of learning in the world: He went there and lived for ſeveral years with the Egyptian prieſts, and was initiated into the principles of their religion; for he ſcrupled not to comply with all their cuſtoms, not even to be circumciſed according to the manner of their prieſts, in order to obtain more eaſy acceſs to their learned men. He brought from them many important diſcoveries in geometry, and the true ſyſtem of the univerſe, which leads me to obſerve, that Egypt was, at a very early period, a learned, polite and poliſhed nation: So early as Joſeph's time, the Egyptian court was remarkably brilliant and ſplendid. I need not ſtate a compariſon between that æra and the preſent

ſent ſtate of that nation: But to return; *Pythagoras* was the firſt who taught in Greece, that the earth and planets moved round the ſun, which was fixed and immoveable in the centre of the ſyſtem: He likewiſe taught the diurnal motion of the earth round its axis, and that the diurnal motion of the heavenly bodies was not real, but apparent; and gave the ſame account of the theory of comets, which is agreeable to modern diſcoveries. He farther taught, that every ſtar was a world, and that each of them had ſomething correſponding to our earth, air, and water, in the vaſt expanſe. The moon, particularly, according to him, was inhabited by larger and more beautiful animals than this globe. He is ſuppoſed by many to have had a particular view to the general principles of gravitation, in what he taught concerning the harmony of the ſpheres.

The doctrines of Pythagoras and his followers, concerning the annual and diurnal motions of the earth, the revolutions of the comets, the inhabitants of the moon and ſtars, and the harmony of the ſpheres, are very remote from the ſuggeſtions of ſenſe, and quite oppoſite to vulgar prejudices: We muſt therefore ſuppoſe, that they who firſt diſcovered them, had made

a

a very conſiderable progreſs in aſtronomy and natural philoſophy.

It is no eaſy matter to perſuade one who is unacquainted with the true theory of motion, and with the true ſyſtem of the univerſe, that the earth, which of all things in nature appears to be moſt fixed and ſtable, ſhould both move round its own axis, and round the ſun as the centre of the ſyſtem, with ſo much rapidity of motion in the vaſt expanſe. To be ſatisfied of theſe doctrines, ſo as to reckon the earth amongſt the ſtars, and to conſider the ſtars as ſo many worlds, one muſt have got over many difficulties from ſenſe, as well as from the religious prejudices that prevailed in thoſe days, and do in ſome meaſure ſtill prevail in our own times.

The followers of Pythagoras do not ſeem, however, to have underſtood their maſter's principles and doctrines ſo well as to be able to ſupport and defend them, however true; for Ariſtotle refuſes them with the appearance at leaſt of reaſon on his ſide, in oppoſition to all their defences. The account he gives of their ſyſtem, ſhows, that either it was not rightly deſcribed by them, or that he miſunderſtood them. On this occaſion, he urges againſt them a complaint, for which, it muſt be owned, philoſophers have but too often given juſt ground :—That inſtead

inſtead of ſuiting their philoſophy to nature, they had miſrepreſented the phœnomena of nature that they might appear conformable to their own pre-conceived principles and opinions.

Ariſtotle was perhaps one of the moſt penetrating and ingenious philoſophers that antiquity can boaſt of.—He ſurpaſſed all the other philoſophers in ſtating the diviſions and definitions relating to his ſubjects with peculiar accuracy. He reaſoned fairly, and with great force and energy, from his definitions. Amongſt other tenets peculiar to this great philoſopher, he declared creation impoſſible; becauſe he could not conceive, nor did he ſuppoſe it within the compaſs of the powers of the human mind, to conceive a *cauſe* adequate to ſuch an *effect*. His penetration and acuteneſs as a philoſopher is acknowledged by all, and does him the greateſt honour. Yet from his philoſophy we may learn, that the greateſt penetration, without other helps, will ever be of leſs ſervice with regard to enquiries into nature, than in metaphyſics, where the force of genius may indeed atchieve wonders. Inſtead of the more ancient ſyſtems, he introduced *matter*, *form*, and *privation*, as the principles of all things; but it does not appear that theſe principles were of any great uſe to him in his enquiries into natural philoſophy.

Some

Some of his doctrines are ſo obſcurely expreſſed, even according to the confeſſion of his moſt devoted diſciples, that though they took the utmoſt pains to diſcover his meaning, they were not able to penetrate into it, nor develope the meaning of his principles; and it is diſputed to this day, what his ſentiments were on ſome of the moſt important ſubjects. It is but juſtice, however, to the merit of this great philoſopher, to obſerve, that he probably did not intend that his diſcoveries ſhould be well underſtood from his public writings.—In ſupport of this opinion, we are told, that when a pupil of his complained of his publiſhing ſome of his works that were dark and obſcure, he inſinuated by his anſwer, that they would be underſtood by philoſophers only.

The reputation he acquired was ſuch, that for a long time he was called the prince of philoſophers, and poſſeſſed the moſt abſolute authority in the ſchools; no philoſopher ever acquired ſo univerſal or ſo high an eſteem. His opinion was held to be ſacred, and to ſtand on a level with reaſon itſelf; the parties, in every diſpute, being obliged to ſhow that their concluſions were no leſs conformable to Ariſtotle's doctrines, than to truth itſelf. Such a ſlaviſh ſubjection to the dictates of philoſophers, or of

any

any authority, however great or reſpectable, I have ever held as unfriendly to that freedom of enquiry which is neceſſary to inveſtigate truth, and a reproach to human nature:—It is to be regretted, that this has been too much the caſe, not only in ancient, but in modern and more enlightened times. A proſecution was at laſt begun and carried on againſt Ariſtotle by the Athenian prieſts, which obliged him to abandon their city, to avoid the fate of Socrates. I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

DEAR SIR,

WHOEVER conſiders the extravagant doctrines of the *Epicureans*, and the other Dogmatiſts, of whatever denomination, may perhaps admire ſome of them for their morality, and more for their eloquence; it having been their chief buſineſs to diſpute for their different ſchemes, and declaim upon them. But with regard to the knowledge of nature, as it is to be collected from their philoſophy, he will not be much ſurpriſed that ſo many joined the ſceptics; and either maintained, with ſome of them, that it was impoſſible to diſcover truth, which was the Pyrrhonian doctrine; or with others, that men were only in purſuit, not in poſſeſſion of it.

The ſects, and ſubdiviſions of ſects, became at length ſo numerous, and their ſyſtems ſo various, that almoſt every perſon of any conſequence, attached himſelf to one ſect or another, and commenced philoſopher; for none could be at a loſs to find a ſect and doctrine ſuited to his taſte and inclination. It does not appear, however, that the increaſe of philoſophers contributed much to the advancement of the ſcience, or to the diſcovery of truth. It is a juſt obſervation, that

from the faults of others, we may, and ſhould correct out own miſtakes: Yet we do not find that the errors of one ſect in philoſophy, ſerved to put others on their guard:—rather in proportion as the number of philoſophers encreaſed, their deviation from truth became greater: they indulged themſelves the more in abſtruſe and fruitleſs diſquiſitions, about the hidden eſſences of things; and, like ſome philoſophers of later times, ſtill more unpardonable than they, abandoning ſubjects in the purſuit of which they might have arrived at the utmoſt certainty, they ſought after knowledge that was quite beyond the reach of the human powers;—I ſhould rather have ſaid, the powers of the human mind, to diſcover. The great maſters I have already mentioned had given an unhappy example; and their ſucceſſors exceeded them, in grafting one fiction on another, to ſerve their own purpoſes, not the cauſe of *faith*. Thus the Platoniſts, whoſe philoſophy was very amiable in theory, became unintelligible myſtics, and the Peripatetics unwearied diſputants.

Each ſect had its own particular tenets ſupported and magnified by its own partizans, but condemned by all the reſt. The Pythagorean doctrine, with reſpect to the ſyſtem of the univerſe,

verſe, was quite forgot, and the opinions of *Ariſtotle* and *Eudoxus* univerſally prevailed. True philoſophy was again loſt, and very uncommon liberties taken with the ſyſtem of nature. Ptolemy, and his followers, multiplied cycles, epicycles, ſolid orbs, to the planets and eccentries, till they quite burdened nature. The ſyſtem of the univerſe, by their deſcriptions of it, loſt its native beauty, and ſeemed again reduced to a chaos, by their unhappy repreſentations of it. It gives me pain to mention this deplorable ſtate of learning to you, who knows it well; and it would be tedious, and little to my preſent purpoſe, to trace the hiſtory of learning through its various revolutions in the later ages, when philoſophy and philoſophers fell into contempt; when they became more diſtinguiſhed by their extravagant opinions, manners and temper, than by any real knowledge and merit. A time, however, ſucceeded, when the ſtate of learning was ſtill more deplorable; and which ought ever to be remembered, as it diſcovers the moſt cruel enemy to learning and true philoſophy. Some time after the fall of the *Roman Empire*, when the majeſty and policy of that people had given way to Gothic barbarity, ſuperſtition reigned uncontrouled; liberty of enquiry was proſcribed,

and a ſavage zeal ſought to root out the memory of ancient learning, by deſtroying the records of it, the ineſtimable product of the labours of paſt times. The fatal unhappy ſcheme proved but too ſucceſsful; for ſoon a thick cloud ſeems to have darkened the underſtandings of men, and to have almoſt extinguiſhed their natural faculties; inſomuch that a part of the ſucceeding times obtained the appellation of the *leaden age*, as being worſe than the *iron age* of the poets. Authority for a long time uſurped the place of reaſon; and under the abſurd pretence of making men more ſubmiſſive to heaven, they were enſlaved, degraded, and ſunk below the native dignity of human nature. It is not to be ſuppoſed, in the æra I am now ſpeaking of, that any improvement ſhould be made in any branch of learning: Here and there, indeed, ſome appeared worthy of better times; but they were obliged to conform to the taſte and genius of that barbarous age; if they applied to true philoſophy, it was either in a private and ſecret manner, or their abilities and merit ſerved only to provoke ſevere and cruel treatment from their ignorant bigotted cotemporaries: this you know was the fate of the celebrated Roger Bacon, who appears to have made ſurpriſing advances

in

in the knowledge of nature, for the times in which he lived, and ſeems to have been acquainted with ſeveral diſcoveries in natural philoſophy that are generally ſuppoſed to be of a later date. In my next, I may perhaps take ſome notice of the conſequences of the ſtate of learning in the period I have juſt now mentioned. I am, dear Sir, &c.

LETTER VII.

DEAR SIR,

THE ſtate of learning which I had occaſion to mention in my laſt, and which you know well, was ſucceeded by an event very unexpected.—When learning was neglected and deſpiſed in Europe, it found at laſt a ſanctuary where it was leaſt of all to be expected, amongſt the Saracens; to them we are indebted for many inventions, as well as for the preſervation of ſcience, that are to be found amongſt the works of the ancients. Their value for theſe, appears from this circumſtance, that it was their uniform manner, to demand copies of their records of learning and philoſophy, in their treaties with the Greek Emperors. It is true, and much to be regretted, that they had deſtroyed an ineſtimable treaſure of this kind at Alexandria, which contained the moſt valuable repoſitory of learning then in the world. This happened, however, in their firſt conqueſts; for afterwards, the Caliph *Almaimon* was celebrated for the liberal encouragement he gave to aſtronomical learning. He erected a conſiderable number of obſervatories over his dominions, and provided them

them with inſtruments for making obſervations, of a prodigious ſize. By his order a degree of the circle of the earth was firſt meaſured with exactneſs, according to the beſt information we have; but at length their philoſophers ſeem to have devoted themſelves to Ariſtotle, in the ſame ſlaviſh manner that the *Europeans* formerly had done, and to a trifling talkative philoſophy that ſerved only to produce inſignificant and endleſs diſputes. The cloud, however, which had long interrupted the progreſs of learning and ſcience in Europe, was at laſt diſpelled.—The active genius of man could not ſubmit to be enſlaved for ever: The love of knowledge revived; the remains of ancient learning, that had eſcaped the wreck of the dark ages, were diligently ſought after; the ſtudy of the liberal arts and ſciences were again reſtored; and perhaps none of them gained more by this happy revolution than natural philoſophy,—it is with pleaſure I obſerve, that theſe obſervations have brought us down to more enlightened and better times. The happy revolution I have juſt now mentioned, in favour of learning and philoſophy, produced the happieſt effects, and the period which commenced with it, has already continued ſome hundred years. It was uſhered in by ſeveral inventions of the greateſt uſe

to

to mankind; and if we may judge from theſe, from the valuable diſcoveries that have been made in its progreſs, and from thoſe which learned men are ſtill in purſuit of, which afford matter for their enquiries, and at the ſame time, keep up their curioſity and expectations; we may juſtly hope, that it will be long before it comes to an end. And if it ſhould likewiſe have its termination, which I fondly hope we have no reaſon to expect; it cannot, however, but be ever memorable in the hiſtory of learning, in future times; unleſs, what we have little reaſon to ſuppoſe, a general oblivion ſhould overwhelm all memory and record.

The invention of convex and concave glaſſes, was as old as the thirteenth century, though no one thought of putting two of them together to make a teleſcope, till three hundred years later. From this circumſtance, we are led to obſerve, that thoſe things which we handle daily, may have valuable properties, altogether unknown to us, which chance or future trials may diſcover. The polarity of the magnetic needle, which was made uſe of in navigation, early in the fourteenth century, facilitated the correſpondence between diſtant nations, and conducted Columbus to the diſcovery of the new world. Every one muſt be ſenſible how advantageous to the intereſts

reſts of learning, the art of printing has proved, which we owe to the ſame century. Theſe, with ſeveral other new and ſurpriſig inventions, produced a very conſiderable change in the ſtate of learning and philoſophy. A ſpirit of general reformation in every department of learning, ſoon ſhewed itſelf in every thing that had any connection with the arts and ſciences.

The celebrated *Copernicus*, who was born at Thorn in Pruſſia, in the year 1473, was the great reviver of aſtronomical learning, Having examined with care and attention, the form, diſpoſition, and motions of this ſyſtem, as they were then repreſented by the followers of *Ptolemy*, he found the whole void of order, ſymetry, and proportion. He therefore peruſed the writings of the ancient philoſophers, to ſee whether any more rational account had ever been propoſed with regard to the motions of the heavenly bodies.

The firſt hint he had, was from Cicero, who, in his academical queſtions, tells us that Nicolas, a Syracuſean, had taught that the earth turned round on its axis, which made the whole heavens appear, to a ſpectator on the earth, to turn round it daily. Afterwards from Plutarch, he found that *Philolaus* the Pythagorean, had taught that the earth moved annually round the ſun.

ſun. He immediately perceived, that by admitting theſe two motions, all the perplexity, confuſion and diſorder he had complained of in the celeſtial motions vaniſhed, and that inſtead of theſe, a ſimple regular diſpoſition of the orbits, and a harmony of the motions appeared, worthy of the great Author of nature.—Some further obſervations upon this ſubject, will be made in my next. I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

DEAR SIR,

IN my laſt, I mentioned a very important ſtep, that Copernicus had taken towards reſtoring the Pythagorean ſyſtem, by eſtabliſhing the diurnal motion of the earth round its axis, and its annual motion round the ſun. Yet he was abundantly ſenſible, that it would not be well received by the generality of men, nor even by the learned of that age. On that account, he could not be prevailed upon to publiſh his theory of the celeſtial motions, for more than thirty years after he had maturely weighed the ſyſtem in his own mind, and was fully ſatisfied of its truth. In this particular, he ſeems to have followed the Pythagoreans, who would not publiſh their myſteries to the world, but choſe rather to deliver them from hand to hand to poſterity; not that they envied others the knowledge of them, but to prevent the beautiful diſcoveries of great men, the fruit of all their enquiries, from becoming the ſport of the preſumptuous and ignorant. By the entreaties and repeated ſolicitations of his friends, he was at laſt prevailed upon to put his writings on the ſyſtem of the univerſe

univerſe into their hands, with permiſſion to publiſh them; and he lived unly to ſee a copy of his book a few hours before his death.

In this treatiſe, he reſtores the ancient Pythagorean ſyſtem, and deduces all the appearances of the celeſtial motions from it. Every ſucceeding age, has produced new arguments in ſupport of it; and notwithſtanding the oppoſition it met with from the prejudices of ſenſe, againſt the earth's motion, the authority of Ariſtotle in the ſchools, the threats of ignorant bigots, and even the terror of the inquiſition, it has gradually prevailed, and we have reaſon to believe, will ſtill prevail, ſo long as a ſtrict regard to truth, and a true taſte for learning and good ſenſe, remains among men. The only argument of any conſequence that had induced Ariſtotle and his followers to conſider the earth as the centre of the univerſe, was, that all bodies have a tendency towards the centre of the earth. This was falſe reaſoning:—That all bodies within the power of the earth's atmoſphere, in the univerſal ſyſtem of nature, have a tendency to the centre of the earth, or power of attraction, is allowed. But this is not peculiar to the earth. In reaſoning from analogy, we have every reaſon to believe, that the property belongs to all the planets; and therefore from this manner

ner of reaſoning, any planet might have been made the centre, as well as our earth, ſince we cannot reſiſt concluding that all the planets have the ſame attractive powers with our earth, on all bodies that are within their reſpective powers of attraction.

The reſtoration of the Pythagorean ſyſtem, was a ſtep of the utmoſt importance for the intereſt of true philoſophy, and paved the way for ſtill more important diſcoveries. But the minds of men were not at that time ſufficiently prepared for receiving it.—A juſt account of the theory of motion was ſtill wanting to make them ſenſible of its ſimplicity and beauty, and to enable them to anſwer, in a ſatisfactory manner, the obvious arguments that appeared againſt it. According to Copernicus, the earth revolved on its axis, with a rapid motion, from weſt to eaſt. To this it was objected, that ſuch a motion could not but have very ſenſible effects on many occaſions, in the common occurences of life;—that a ſtone, for example, dropped from the top of a tower, ought to ſtrike the ground, not at the foot of the tower, but at ſome diſtance weſtward, ſince the earth was moving eaſtward, and conſequently the tower, while the ſtone was falling. In anſwer to this, the motion of the earth was compared to the uni-

form motion of a ſhip at ſea, and it was affirmed, what may be affirmed with great truth, that a ſtone or any ponderous body, dropped from the top of the maſt, would ſtrike the deck at the foot of it, though the ſhip was under ſail, and advancing at a great rate, while the ſtone was falling. This experiment has been often ſucceſsfully made, and is now beyond all doubt. Some, however, who had tried it without proper care and attention, having reported to *Tycho Brache* that it had not ſucceeded, this circumſtance, with a miſtaken zeal for the ſacred writings, and perhaps, too, an ambition for being the inventor of a new ſyſtem, led to what is called the *Tychonic* ſyſtem. I cannot now enter into a particular account of it, but it was found to be ſo abſurd and ridiculous that it was long ſince exploded. You know Tycho rejected the doctrine of Copernicus, and propoſed a kind of middle ſcheme. He ſtill conſidered the ſun as the centre of the great ſyſtem of nature; yet at the ſame time, made the earth quieſcent or at reſt. Such a train of abſurdities neceſſarily aroſe from this view of the ſyſtem, that it was impoſſible it could be ſupported. Though he was not happy in eſtabliſhing a new ſyſtem, yet he did great ſervice to aſtronomy, by his diligence and accuracy in making obſervations for

a long ſeries of years. His obſervations paved the way for ſome very conſiderable improvements in philoſophy, for which he will always be celebrated by aſtronomers. This has brought us down to near the latter end of the Sixteenth century; and, in my next, I ſhall take notice of the new diſcoveries that were then made. In the mean time, I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

DEAR SIR,

IN my laſt, I promiſed to take notice of ſome diſcoveries in philoſophy that were made towards the end of the Sixteenth century. About this time, or about the beginning of the ſeventeenth, *Galileo* and *Kepler* diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the defence of the Copernican ſyſtem, and by many new diſcoveries in the ſyſtem of the univerſe. The celebrated *Galileo* was no leſs happy in his philoſophical enquiries, than in the diſcoveries he made in the heavens by the teleſcope. And to the admirable *Kepler*, we owe the diſcovery of the true figure of the orbits of the planets, and the proportion of the motions of the whole ſolar ſyſtem, though the philoſophical improvement of theſe phœnomena was reſerved for Sir Iſaac Newton.

Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, who was cotemporary with Galileo and Kepler, is juſtly held amongſt the firſt claſs of thoſe who reſtored and promoted the intereſt of true learning; more eſpecially he was the great founder of experimental philoſophy; from his early years, he began to diſlike the common way of treating phyſics; which, to confeſs the truth, had been very

very improperly conducted. He ſaw there was a neceſſity for a thorough reformation in the manner of treating natural knowledge, and that all theory was to be laid aſide that was not founded on experiment. He conſiders natural philoſophy as a vaſt pyramid that ought to have the hiſtory of nature for its baſis; an account of the powers and principles that operate in nature, which he calls the phyſical part, for its ſecond ſtage; and the metaphyſical part, which treats of the formal and final cauſes of things, for its third ſtage. But as for the ſummit of this pyramid, the ſupreme of nature, he doubts if men can ever attain to the full knowledge of it. Had the hiſtory of nature, which he lays as the foundation, been more attended to, and were the powers and principles that carry on the operations of nature, better underſtood; in ſhort, had philoſophers ſince Lord Verulam's time, adhered more cloſely to his plan, their ſucceſs would have been much greater, learning and philoſophy would have made much greater progreſs than it has done, and Sir Iſaac Newton's philoſophy, would not have found the learned ſo full of prejudices againſt it, in favours of ſome other ſyſtems, highly extolled by ſpeculative men. I am happy that the public is now

favoured with a publication on the philoſophy of natural philoſophy, which, from the abilities of the author, will, I hope, throw conſiderable light on that important ſubject. The ſublime geometry which ſhone throughout Sir Iſaac Newton's works was admired by all, yet for ſome time, very few ſeemed diſpoſed to give any attention to his philoſophy, or to judge of it impartially. The prejudices in favour of other ſyſtems, of the Carteſian philoſophy in particular, were ſo ſtrong, and ſo deeply rooted, that it kept poſſeſſion of the ſchools for a number of years; and it was not till, in the lapſe of time, that theſe prejudices wore out, that Sir Iſaac's philoſophy became an object of attention, or was examined with that candour and impartiality that it ſo juſtly merited, and was neceſſary to give it a firm and permanent eſtabliſhment in the ſchools. Lord Verulam's example, and the plan he had propoſed for proſecuting the ſtudy of philoſophy, had at laſt a very happy effect. Experimental philoſophy has been much more cultivated ſince his time, than in any preceding period. Geometry and philoſophy, though diſtinct ſciences, advanced together, and gave mutual aid to each other. The evidence ariſing from geometry, began to take place in philoſophy, when every thing came to be examined by number,

number, weight, and meaſure; the principles of the theory of motion being now clearly underſtood, furniſhed excellent illuſtrations of the abſtruſe parts of geometry. Some of theſe I ſhall take notice of in another letter. I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER X.

DEAR SIR,

I HAD occaſion, in a former letter, to mention Galileo and Kepler, as having made very conſiderable improvements in philoſophy at the period they wrote, by making diſcoveries of very great importance, in ſupport of the Copernican ſyſtem; and Galileo had ſcholars worthy of ſo great a maſter, by whom the gravitation of the atmoſphere, its weight and preſſure, was fully eſtabliſhed; its varying preſſure was accurately meaſured and aſcertained, by a column of quick-ſilver of equal weight, ſuſtained by it in the tube of the barometer.

The elaſticity of the air, by which it perpetually endeavours to expand itſelf, and while it admits of condenſation, reſiſts in proportion to its denſity; this was a phœnomenon of a new kind, for the common fluids have no ſuch property; yet it was a diſcovery of the utmoſt importance to the intereſt of philoſophy.

Theſe principles opened up a very large field of new and uſeful knowledge, and explained a great variety of phœnomena which had been accounted

accounted for in a very abſurd manner before that time. It ſeemed as if the air, the fluid in which men have lived from the beginning, had then only been firſt diſcovered, philoſophers every where enquiring into its various properties and their effects; and diſcoveries of the utmoſt importance to philoſophy, was the reward of their enquiries. Of the great numbers who diſtinguiſhed themſelves on this occaſion, it is no more than juſtice to the merit of theſe great men, to mention *Torricelli* in Italy, *Paſchal* in France, *Guorrick* in Germany, and *Boyle* in England.

The views of philoſophers began at this time to be greatly enlarged, not by their diſcoveries concerning the air only, but likewiſe by their enquiries into the more powerful element of fire, and the effects produced by it, as well as into the chymical compoſition, reſolution and changes of bodies. For it was about this time that chymiſts began to ſpeak more intelligibly concerning their art, and to connect it in ſome degree with natural philoſophy, or to conſider it, at leaſt, as not altogether foreign to it.

This we owe in a great meaſure to the honourable Mr Robert Boyle, whoſe favourite ſtudy chymeſtry is ſaid to have been, and who was remarkably happy, in an eaſy and familiar manner

manner of deſcribing or handling the ſubjects which were treated by him. He was perhaps one of the firſt experimental philoſophers that this, or any nation has at any time produced. No one perhaps ever took ſo much pains to promote natural knowledge, or the beſt improvement that can be made of it. It has been obſerved, that he was born the ſame year that Lord Bacon died, as if he had been deſtined to carry on his plan. He ſpared no labour nor coſt in collecting the hiſtory of nature, and making the moſt curious and uſeful experiments of all ſorts. As Lord Bacon's plan comprehended the whole compaſs of nature; ſo the variety of enquiries proſecuted by Mr Boyle, with the greateſt care and attention, is truly ſurpriſing, and perhaps not to be equalled in the hiſtory of philoſophy. Hydroſtatics, though a moſt uſeful branch of mechanical philoſophy, had been but ill underſtood till he eſtabliſhed its principles, and illuſtrated its paradoxes, by a number of plain experiments, in the moſt ſatisfactory manner. Pneumatics, or the doctrine of the air, afforded him an ample field; and in this he made many valuable and important diſcoveries. To him we are indebted for that perfection to which the air pomp is now brought; and who does not know of what infinite importance the diſcoveries made by it have been

been to natural philoſophy? Theſe circumſtances which I have mentioned, are well known to you. I ſhall have occaſion to take ſome further notice of Mr Boyle's improvements, in my next. In the mean time, I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

DEAR SIR,

THE happy ſtate of learning and philoſophy with which I concluded my laſt, I know you contemplate with a ſenſible pleaſure. I cannot help however obſerving, that had the enquiries of philoſophers in general, been more properly directed, learning would have made much quicker advances, and would, by this time, have arrived at a much higher degree of perfection than it has yet done. This, however, I ſhall take notice of more fully afterwards.—After making this obſervation, I return with pleaſure to conſider the further improvements in philoſophy made by Mr Boyle. In all his reſearches, he diſcovered a genius happily turned for experimental philoſophy, with the moſt perfect candour, in examining with patience, and refuting with great modeſty, the errors which philoſophers had been led into from their prejudices, and the many artful ſubterfuges by which they endeavoured to ſupport them. The unexceptionable integrity, the extenſive charity and ſingular piety of this excellent, great and good man, did great honour to philoſophy, as well as to human nature, and formed an eminent part

part of his character. The world he conſidered as the temple of God, and man (to uſe his own words) as born the prieſt of nature, ordained by being qualified to celebrate divine ſervice in it. There is a grandeur and ſublimity in this thought that merits our attention. It is placing the creation in the grandeſt point of view,—the temple of God; and man in the moſt reſpectable and dignified point of light,—the prieſt, ordained by being qualified to celebrate divine ſervice in the temple of God:—A ſentiment worthy of human nature; worthy of ſo great and good a man.

Not ſatisfied with having promoted the belief of a Deity, and the evidence of true religion, to the utmoſt of his power, in a number of volumes, compoſed by him during the courſe of a laborious life, he has taken care, by his will, to perpetuate a ſucceſſion of advocates, who ſhould make the ſame improvement; not of his own diſcoveries only, or of thoſe of former times, but of thoſe which ſhould be produced by after ages. The inſtitution I mean is Boyle's Lectures, where a certain number of diſcourſes are delivered every year, by the moſt eminent divines, in ſupport of the grounds and evidences of the Chriſtian religion. Many of theſe diſcourſes, you know, have been publiſhed; and from them

it appears, that in this deſign, worthy of ſo excellent a man, the ſucceſs has been anſwerable to his intentions; I cannot conclude this account of ſo great and good a man, without obſerving, what every one will readily allow, that he was not an ornament to his own age and country only, but to human nature, and a public benefit to all times, and to all nations.

We are now arrived at the happy æra of experimental philoſopoy; when men, unfettered by ſyſtems, and the trammels of authorities, but proceeding upon obſervation and experiments, proſecuted uſeful knowledge, and the arts and ſciences received daily great improvements.

Not only private men, but ſocieties of men, with united zeal, ingenuity, and induſtry, proſecuted their enquiries into the ſecrets of nature, devoted to no ſect or ſyſtem. Yet notwithſtanding the advances philoſophers had made in this flouriſhing period of ſcience, it would ſeem that nature did not unveil herſelf readily enough to ſatisfy the impatience of ſome men. What I mean, is, that there were ſome, perhaps not a few, who, from their attachment to other ſyſtems, could not diveſt themſelves of prejudice ſo far as to examine with candour, the vaſt improvements that had been made in philoſophy. They could not be contented with thoſe views

of

of nature, which the improvers of philoſophy had given, but which required time aud induſtry to produce their full effects. I will be led to take further notice of ſome particulars relative to what I have juſt now hinted, in my next.—I am, &c.

LETTER XII.

You are ſurpriſed, my dear Sir, that any ſhould have found fault with the diſcoveries and improvements that had been made in philoſophy. You need not be ſurpriſed: Tenets that have once been adopted and received as popular opinions, require a long time to be rooted out and entirely overcome; time only, and cool reflection, can eradicate the prejudices in their favour, from the minds of men: We find this to be the caſe with regard to many things in common life, as well as in philoſophy. About the period I am now ſpeaking of, a moſt illuſive ſcheme of ſpeculative philoſophy appeared, and prevailed very univerſally, which, by miſleading ingenious men, corrupted their notions, and retarded their progreſs in the ſearch of truth.

The Carteſian philoſophy was the moſt extenſive ſyſtem, and, in the opinion of many of that age, the moſt exquiſite in its contrivance of any the world had ever known. A ſhort account of this ſyſtem, will, I hope, not be unacceptable to you. The author, Des Cartes, was a philoſo-

pher

pher of a bold and ſubtle genius.—He valued himſelf much upon his clear ideas, and is allowed to have contributed not a little towards diſſipating the darkneſs of that ſort of ſcience which then prevailed in the ſchools; yet his ſyſtem of philoſophy was the moſt illuſive and romantic that the heart or head of man could poſſibly imagine; even he himſelf, among his familiar friends, uſed to call it his philoſophical romance. How juſtly it merited that appellation, will evidently appear, from barely mentioning a few of his leading principles, as ſelected from his writings. He begins his principia, or leading principles, with ſhowing the neceſſity of doubting of every thing, even of our own exiſtence, in order to our obtaining certain knowledge; and he recommends it to his readers, to conſider well his reaſons for doubting of all things, not once only, but to employ weeks or months on theſe alone, before he proceed further.

What ſyſtem of philoſophy was to be expected from a foundation laid on this leading principle? Is there no ſuch thing as exiſtence in nature?—If there is not, What is nature? What is exiſtence?—Nothing. And why pretend to philoſophiſe, when there is nothing to philoſophiſe upon? Is there no ſuch thing as truth and falſehood, right and wrong, in the world;

or, does the world exiſt? This is bringing us back to the old Pyrrhonian ſyſtem, which is long ſince exploded. Fanciful and ſpeculative men may amuſe themſelves and the world with theſe idle ſpeculations, but they are not ſound philoſophy. After Des Cartes has laid down his leading principle, to doubt of every thing, he next endeavours to eſtabliſh the certainty of our own exiſtence, and that of our ideas, which we are intimately conſcious of to ourſelves: of the exiſtence of which, after all he has ſaid about them, it is impoſſible for us to doubt for a moment. However refined his ideas might be, and however exalted his views, yet they were unphiloſophical and quite out of nature. In my next I ſhall give ſome farther account of his principles, which I hope will ſufficiently eſtabliſh the truth of what I have ſaid concerning them. I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

DEAR SIR,

I CONCLUDED my laſt with ſome obſervations on Des Cartes' ſyſtem of philoſophy,—the moſt illuſive dream that ever was known among men, and promiſed to give you ſome farther account of it in this.—He concludes, That there muſt be a Being infinitely perfect, and neceſſarily exiſting, from our having the idea of ſuch a Being. Let me aſk, How came we by this idea? Is it natural to the mind of man?—I refuſe it.—The exiſtence of matter gives no conceiveable proof to the mind of man that it once did not exiſt: Therefore we can never know, without divine information, that one gave it exiſtence, or that there was a Creator. His reaſoning on this ſubject is inconcluſive: It is taking for granted what remains to be demonſtrated.—His manner of reaſoning, after he thinks he has eſtabliſhed this truth, the exiſtence of a Deity, is very extraordinary. He makes the certainty of ſelf-evident truths, or axioms, as well as of all other neceſſary truths, to depend upon the will of the Deity.—What abſurd reaſoning is this!

He

He tells us they are neceſſarily ſo, becauſe he wills them to be ſo.—Two and three are equal to five, not naturally and neceſſarily, but becauſe the Deity wills them to be ſo. The Deity did not will that the three angles of a triangle ſhould be equal to two right angles, becauſe he knew they could not be otherwiſe; but becauſe he willed them to be ſo, therefore they neceſſarily are ſo.—This is ſporting both with Deity and with ſcience, and is the moſt inconcluſive reaſoning the world ever knew. By making all truth and falſehood depend on the will of the Deity, he has given unworthy, unjuſt repreſentations of his character, as being arbitrary and capricious. He has weakened all ſcience, and confounded all its principles. I ſpeak not at random, when I ſay, the Deity ought to be viewed by man in a much more reſpectable light, and the neceſſary truths that exiſt in nature ought to be viewed in a light more worthy of God and worthy of man.

From the knowledge of a firſt cauſe, eſtabliſhed in the manner I have mentioned, he pretends to deduce a complete knowledge of his effects or works, as they exiſt in the viſible creation, by natural and neceſſary ſteps. It is clear, ſays he, that we ſhall follow the beſt method of philoſophizing, if, from our knowledge of the Deity himſelf, we

we endeavour to deduce an explication of all his works, and conſequently ſhall obtain the beſt ſyſtem of philoſophy; for then we ſhall acquire the moſt perfect kind of ſcience, that of deducing effects from their cauſes.—This reaſoning may perhaps go down with ſome modern philoſophers, but it will not go down with me. How come we by that knowledge of Deity that is neceſſary to make this deduction? And how can we trace the connexion between cauſes that ly quite beyond our reach of knowledge, and the effects which they produce! Philoſophers may ſpeculate upon this ſubject as much as they pleaſe; but let me tell you, we can reaſon none between cauſes and effects, when both do not ly fairly within our view, ſo as we can trace the inſeparable connexion. Without that, our reaſoning is at an end; we can form no concluſion.

From the veracity of the Deity, he infers the reality of material objects, which are repreſented to us as exiſting without us. I am not able to trace the connexion of this reaſoning, nor to ſee its force.—That God is a Being of infinite veracity and truth, is unqueſtionably certain; of that we have the higheſt degree of evidence that can be given to men. But where is the propriety of inferring, from this perfection of the Deity, the reality of the exiſtence of matter? And

And why ſhould the reality of the exiſtence of matter depend upon this inference, when the Deity himſelf has given us occular demonſtrations of its real exiſtence?

Some other particulars with regard to this ſyſtem will be taken notice of in my next, which I cannot now overtake. I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

DEAR SIR,

ACCORDING to promiſe in my laſt, I now give you ſome further obſervations on the Carteſian philoſophy. The next thing I have to obſerve, after what I mentioned laſt, is his placing the eſſence of matter in extenſion only; for this alone, he tells us, remains, when all other qualities are rejected; ſuch as hardneſs, ſoftneſs, colour, weight, heat, and cold, and the other qualities without which matter may exiſt.—Hence, he concludes, that there can be no void or extenſion without matter.—I will not ſay he is wrong in this. The great diſpute between Newtonians and Hutchinſonians, was, whether there is a *vacuum* or *plenum*; in nature; I am inclined to think there is a *plenum*, and therefore wherever there is extenſion, there will be matter of ſome kind or other: Even light and air are matter; and wherever they are, there matter exiſts.

What conſtitutes the eſſence of matter, we know not. Matter is ſo familiar to us, that we think

think we know it well. We are much miſtaken, we know nothing of it but by its qualities, and their effects. We may therefore be ſaid to know as much of ſpirit as we do of matter; the eſſence of both is equally unknown to man. But notwithſtanding all this in which he was right, yet it is perhaps impoſſible to conceive a more extravagant undertaking, than to attempt thus to deduce, by neceſſary conſequence, the whole fabric of nature, and a full explication of all the phœnomena in nature, from any ideas we are able to form of an infinitely perfect Being.

Des Cartes forgot, that though reaſoning between cauſes and effects is very juſt, where both ly fairly within our view, ſo that we can trace the connexion; yet when the cauſe is removed quite beyond our reach of ken, we can form no concluſion. He is not the only philoſopher that ſeems to have forgot this important truth. Where is the neceſſary connexion between the moſt perfect ideas we are able to form of Him who is perfect in wiſdom, and the ſyſtem of the univerſe, as it now exiſts? Or is it concluſive to reaſon from what we know of the nature and perfections of this all perfect being, that the ſyſtem of nature muſt neceſſarily exiſt in its preſent form and no other? How eaſily might this, as

well

well as his making all truth and falſehood depend on the will of the Deity, be traced to an abſurdity?

Other philoſophers have complained, that they were able to account for too little of nature; but Des Cartes finds that his principles were more than ſufficient to account for all the phœnomena of nature, and ſeems only to fear leſt he ſhould account for too much He acknowledges that the ſame effect may be deduced from his principles many different ways, and that nothing perplexed him more than to know which of them obtained in nature. It is doing him no injuſtice to ſay, that, on theſe occaſions, he magnifies his principles, in order to conceal the weakneſs of his ſyſtem, which he himſelf was conſcious of; and he does this with a degree of affectation that only ſerves to make his weakneſs more evident, and appear unworthy of ſo great a man.

By placing the eſſence of matter in extenſion only, he has laid a foundation for drawing conſequences of the moſt dangerous tendency, which he did not foreſee, and, I am perſuaded, did not intend ſhould be drawn from them. We are not able to conceive that ſpace can be annihilated, or that there ever was a time, according to all our ideas of time, when ſpace or expan-

ſion was not. And if it be allowed that extenſion alone conſtitutes the eſſence of matter, we cannot reſiſt aſcribing infinity, eternity, and neceſſary exiſtence to it. What is the conſequence of this reaſoning? As we cannot conceive that ſpace had a beginning, or that it once did not exiſt, we therefore muſt conclude, that matter exiſted from eternity; and as we cannot conceive that ſpace will ever ceaſe to exiſt, therefore we muſt conclude, that matter will continue to exiſt, ſo long as ſpace or expanſion continues to exiſt;—for ever.

It is in this manner Spinoza reaſons from the Carteſian principles, affirming that matter is not only infinite and neceſſarily exiſtent, but that it is one and indiviſible. It is not my intention to give you a particular account of the ſyſtem of Spinoza, nor indeed is it poſſible to deſcribe fully, in an intelligible manner, ſo abſurd a ſyſtem. It is allowed, even by modern ſceptics, who are not friendly to the intereſts of religion, to be the moſt monſtrous that can well be imagined, and ſo oppoſite to the moſt evident notions we are able to form, that no man in a ſound ſtate of mind, can be in danger of being miſled by it. Mr Bayle, in his celebrated Dictionary, expoſes the abſurdities of this ſyſtem very clearly, and affirms, that the weakeſt

eſt of its adverſaries were able to have overturned it.

Leaving, however, the inferences and deductions, that Spinoza, Leibnitz, and others, have made from the Carteſian ſyſtem, I would only further obſerve, that, notwithſtanding the glaring abſurdities with which it was loaded, it kept poſſeſſion of the ſchools for much of a century. Philoſophers were intoxicated with the idea of his vortices and whirlpools, and, with uncommon boldneſs and effrontery, pretended, from his principles, to account for, and explain the whole phœnomena of nature.

A well inſtructed Carteſian would not have thought himſelf in the leaſt difficulted by the queſtions which the Almighty put to Job, about the formation of natural things, to humble his pride, and to convince him that man knows but little of the ways and works of the moſt high. When any flaw was found in the ſyſtem, it was patched up and mended from time to time, till at laſt the foundation was found ſo faulty, and the whole ſuperſtructure ſo erroneous, that it was cruſhed under the diſcoveries of Sir Iſaac Newton. I cannot, at preſent, enter upon the Newtonian ſyſtem. It may perhaps be the ſubject of a future correſpondence. I am, &c.

FINIS.